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# ADVERTISEMENT.

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It is proposed to give, in these little volumes, some such introduction to the great writers of Greece and Rome as may open to those who have not received a classical education—or in whose case it has been incomplete and fragmentary—a fair acquaintance with the contents of their writings, and the leading features of their style.

The constant allusions in our own literature, and even in our daily press, to the works of the ancient classical authors, and the familiarity with the whole *dramatis personæ* of ancient history and fable which modern writers on all subjects assume on the part of their readers, make such an acquaintance almost necessary for those who care not only to read but to understand.

Even in the case of readers who have gone through the regular classical course in their day, this acquaintance, if honest confession were made, would be found very imperfect. It is said, of

course, that "every English gentleman reads Horace;" but this is one of those general assertions which rest upon very loose ground. An ordinary observer of the habits of the class might find himself somewhat at a loss for instances.

In the case of ladies, and of the large body of general readers who have received either no classical education, or a very imperfect one, probably less is now known of Homer, Virgil, or Horace, than in the days when Pope's, Dryden's, and Francis's translations were first published, and took their place for the time on every literary table.

There appears a strong probability that the study of Greek and Latin, which has so long been our exclusive idea of a "liberal" education, will hereafter be confined within a narrower circle. Yet some knowledge of the ancient classics must continue to be the key to much of our best English literature. If, as some educational reformers suggest, a systematic course of English reading be substituted for Latin and Greek in our "middle-class" schools, such a training will necessarily involve the careful study of the masters of English thought and style, and more especially of those earlier authors whose taste was formed very much upon the old classical models, and whose writings are full of allusions to their characters and imagery.

It may be said that we have translations of all the best and most popular of the classical authors, and that many of these are admirable in their execution. This is quite true. The Iliad, the Odyssey, the Æneid, Horace, and some of the Greek Dramatists, have lately found translators who, in point of taste and general accuracy, leave little to be desired. But the results of their work will be best enjoyed and valued by those whose acquaintance with the originals enables them to appreciate not only the positive beauty of the English version, but its relative merit as conveying the spirit and sense of the Greek or Latin author. Even the best translation (especially of the classical poets) may fail to have a continuous interest for the merely modern reader, unless he has some previous familiarity with the argument of the work, the personages introduced, and the characteristics of the age in which the scene and action lie.

The aim of the present series will be to explain, sufficiently for general readers, who these great writers were, and what they wrote; to give, wherever possible, some connected outline of the story which they tell, or the facts which they record, checked by the results of modern investigations; to present some of their most striking passages in approved English translations, and to

illustrate them generally from modern writers; to serve, in short, as a popular retrospect of the chief literature of Greece and Rome. The attempt appeals, as will be seen, to a circle outside that of classical scholarship; though possibly some who have all legal claim to rank as scholars, but who now stand rather on the "retired list" of that service, may in these pages meet some old acquaintances whom they have almost forgotten. If, in any case, they find our re-introduction unsatisfactory, none would advise them more heartily than we do to renew the old personal intercourse for themselves.

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It has been thought desirable in these pages to use the Latin names of the Homeric deities, as more familiar to English ears. As, however, most modern translators have followed Homer's Greek nomenclature, it may be convenient here to give both.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Zeus | = | Jupiter. |
| Herè | = | Juno. |
| Arēs | = | Mars. |
| Poseidōn | = | Neptune. |
| Pallas Athenè | = | Minerva. |
| Aphroditè | = | Venus. |
| Hephaistos | = | Vulcan. |
| Hermes | = | Mercury. |
| Artemis | = | Diana. |

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The passages marked (D.) are from Lord Derby's translation; (W.) from Mr Worsley's; and (P.) Pope's.

# INTRODUCTION.

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It is quite unnecessary here to discuss the question, on which the learned are very far from being agreed, whether Homer—the "Prince of Poets"—had any real existence; whether he was really the author of the two great poems which bear his name, or whether they are the collected works of various hands, dove-tailed into each other by some clever editor of ancient times. Homer will still retain his personality for the uncritical reader, however a sceptical criticism may question it. The blind old bard, wandering from land to land, singing his lays of the old heroic times to a throng of admiring listeners, must always continue to be the familiar notion of the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Such was the universal creed of the world of readers until a comparatively recent date; and the speculations of modern scholars, in this as in other cases, have been much more successful in shaking the popular belief than in replacing it by any constructive theory of their own which is nearly so credible. "Homer" is quite as likely to have been really Homer, as a mere name under whose shadow

the poems of various unknown writers have been grouped.

There is extant a Life of the poet, said to have been composed by the Greek historian Herodotus, quoted as such by early writers, and possibly, after all, quite as trustworthy as the destructive conjectures of those critics who would allow him no life at all. There we are told that his birth, like that of so many heroes of antiquity, was illegitimate; that he was the son of Critheis, who had been betrayed by her guardian; that he was born near Smyrna, on the banks of the river Meles, and was thence called "Melesigenes." His mother is said afterwards to have married a schoolmaster named Phemius, by whom the boy was adopted, and in due course succeeded to his new father's occupation. But the future bard soon grew weary of such confinement. He set out to see the world; visiting in turn Egypt, Italy, Spain, the islands of the Mediterranean, and gathering material for at least one of his great works, the adventures of the hero Odysseus (Ulysses), known to us as the Odyssey. In the course of his travels he became blind, and thence was called "Homeros"—"the blind man"—such at least is one of the interpretations of his name.* In that state returning to his native town of Smyrna, he, like his great English successor, Milton, composed his two great poems. One of the few passages in which any personal allusion to himself has been traced, or fancied, in Homer's verse, is a scene in the Odyssey,

* Said to be an Ionian term—"One who follows a guide." There are several other interpretations of the name, not necessary to be given here.

where the blind harper Demodocus is introduced as singing his lays in the halls of King Alcinous :—

> "Whom the Muse loved, and gave him good and ill—
> Ill, that of light she did his eyes deprive ;
> Good, that sweet minstrelsies divine at will
> She lent him, and a voice men's ears to thrill." (W.)

So, in the same poem, the only other bard who appears is also blind—Phemius, who is compelled to exercise his art for the diversion of the dissolute suitors of Penelope. The fact of blindness is in itself by no means incompatible with the notion of Homer's having constructed and recited even two such long poems as the Iliad and the Odyssey. The blind have very frequently remarkable memories, together with a ready ear and passionate love for music.

For the rest of his life, Homer is said to have roamed from city to city as a wandering minstrel, singing his lays through the towns of Asia Minor, in the islands of the Archipelago, and even in the streets of Athens itself, and drawing crowds of eager listeners wherever he went by the wondrous charm of his song. This wandering life has been assumed to imply that he was an outcast and poor. The uncertainty of his birthplace, and the disputes to which it gave rise in after times, were the subject of an epigram whose pungency passed for truth—

> "Seven rival towns contend for Homer dead,
> Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

But the begging is not in the original lines at all, and a wandering minstrel was no dishonoured guest, wherever he appeared, in days much later than Homer's. Somewhere on the coast of the Levant he

died and was buried, leaving behind him that name which retains its spell hardly weakened by the lapse of some twenty-seven centuries, and the two great poems which have been confessedly the main source of the epic poetry, the heroic drama, and the early romance of Europe.

Other works are ascribed to Homer's name besides the Iliad and the Odyssey, but the authorship appears more doubtful. If we trust the opinion of Aristotle, Homer was the father of comic narrative poetry as well as of epic. The poem called 'Margites,' attributed to him, contained the travels and adventures of a wealthy and pedantic coxcomb: but slight fragments only of this have been preserved—enough to show that the humour was somewhat more gross than one would expect from the poet of the Odyssey, though redeemed, no doubt, by satire of a higher kind, as in the surviving line which, in describing the hero's accomplishments, seems to anticipate the multifarious and somewhat superficial knowledge of the present day—

> "Full many things he knew—and ill he knew them all."

Admitting the personality of the poet himself, and his claim to the authorship of both Iliad and Odyssey, it is not necessary to suppose that either poem was framed originally as a whole, or recited as a whole upon every occasion. No doubt the song grew as he sung. He would probably add from time to time to the original lay. The reciter, whose audience must depend entirely upon him for their text, has an almost unlimited licence of interpolation and expansion. It may be fairly granted also that future minstrels, who

sung the great poet's lays after his death, would interweave with them here and there something of their own, more or less successful in its imitation of the original. Such explanation of the repetitions and incongruities which are to be found in the Iliad seems at least as reasonable as the supposition that its twenty-four books are the work of various hands, "stitched together"—such is one explanation of the term "rhapsody"—in after times, and having a common origin only in this, that all sung of the "wondrous Tale of Troy."

That tale was for generations the mainspring of Greek legend and song, and the inspiration of Greek painters and sculptors. At this day, the attempt to separate the fabulous from the real, to reduce the rich colouring of romance into the severe outlines of history, is a task which even in the ablest hands seems hopeless. The legends themselves are various, and contradictory in their details. The leading characters in the story—Priam, Helen, Agamemnon, Achilles, Ulysses, Paris, Hector and Andromache—appear in as many different aspects and relations as the fancy of each poet chose. In this respect they are like the heroes of our own "Round Table" romances; like Arthur and Guinevere, Lancelot, Tristram, and Percival—common impersonations on whom all kinds of adventures are fastened, though the main characteristics of the portrait are preserved throughout. What amount of bare historical truth may or may not underlie the poetical colouring—whether there was or was not a real Greek expedition and a real siege of Troy, less "heroic" and more probable in its extent and details than the Iliad represents it—is no question to be here discussed. So far as liter-

ary interest is concerned, "the real Trojan war," as Mr Grote well says, "is that which is recounted by Homer." It will be sufficient here to take the poet as our main authority, and to fill up his picture from other legendary sources; for though Homer's version of the Great Trojan War is the earliest account which has come down to us, he drew his material from still earlier lays and legends, with which he assumes all his readers (or hearers) to be tolerably familiar; and which, again, the later poets and tragedians reproduced with many additions and variations of their own.

The preservation of poems of such great length (the Iliad alone contains between fifteen and sixteen thousand lines) in days when writing, even if invented, was in its infancy, has been the subject of much speculation. That they were publicly recited at great national festivals in all parts of Greece, is undoubted. Professional minstrels, or "rhapsodists," as they were called, chanted certain selected portions which suited their own taste or that of their audience—often such as contained the exploits of some national hero. They followed possibly in this the example of the great bard himself; just as certain of our own popular writers have lately taken to read, to an admiring public, some favourite scenes and chapters from their own works. Lycurgus is said to have brought the collected poems from Asia to Sparta; Solon, at Athens, to have first obliged the minstrels to recite the several portions in due order, so as to preserve the continuity of the narrative. Pisistratus, the great Athenian ruler, has the reputation of having first reduced the whole into a collected shape, and of having thus far settled the "text" of Homer, employing in this work the most eminent

men of letters of his day. There is a legend of a Homeric 'Septuagint:' of seventy learned scribes employed in the great work, as in the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. From the time when the Iliad and Odyssey were reduced to writing, their popularity rather increased than waned. They were the storehouse of Greek history, genealogy, and antiquity—the models and standards of literary taste. To be unacquainted with these masterpieces, was to be wholly without culture and education: and, thanks to their continual and public recital, this want was perhaps less prevalent amongst the Greeks than amongst ourselves. The young Alcibiades, when receiving the usual education of a Greek gentleman, is said to have struck his tutor one day in a burst of righteous indignation, for having made the confession—certainly inexcusable in his vocation—that he did not possess a copy of the great poet. Alexander the Great carried always with him the copy which had been corrected by his master Aristotle, preserved in a jewelled casket taken amongst the spoils of Darius. No pains were spared in the caligraphy, or costliness in the mountings, of favourite manuscripts of the Homeric poems. They continued to be regarded with almost a superstitious reverence even during the middle ages of Christendom. Men's future destinies were discovered, by a sort of rude divination, in verses selected at hap-hazard. Fantastic writers saw in the two poems nothing more or less than allegorical versions of Hebrew history; and grave physicians recommended as an infallible recipe for a *quartan* ague, the placing every night a copy of the *fourth* book of the Iliad under the patient's head. Modern critical speculations have gone quite as far in

another direction. In the eyes of some ingenious theorists, this siege of Troy is but "a repetition of the daily siege of the East by the solar powers that every evening are robbed of their brightest treasures in the West;"* and the Homeric heroes and their exploits all represent allegorically, in one form or another, the great conflict between Light and Darkness. But such questions are beyond the scope of these pages; we are content here to take the tale of Troy as the poet tells it.

The supposed date of the story may be taken as some fifteen centuries before the Christian era. The great City of Troy, or Ilium, lay on the coast of Asia Minor—its reputed site still bearing the name of the Troad, a broad well-watered champaign, with a height still recognised as the citadel towering above it. "No royal seat of the ancient world," says a modern visitor to the spot, "could boast a grander situation than the Trojan citadel."† As to its actual locality and existence, there is little ground for scepticism. The tradition of the name and place was unbroken in the early historical ages of Greece. Xerxes, king of Persia, in his expedition, is said to have visited the citadel, and to have offered there a thousand oxen to the tutelary goddess; possibly, it has been suggested, claiming to be the avenger of the Asiatic kings on their European enemies.‡ Mindarus, the Lacedæmonian admiral, seventy years later, sacrificed there also: and Alexander, when he crossed the Hellespont, not only did the same, but took from the temple some of the sacred arms which

* Max Müller; Cox's Tales of Ancient Greece.
† Curtius's Hist. of Greece, i. 80.
‡ Grote, Hist. of Greece, i. 271.

were hung there (said to be those of the heroes of the great siege), offering up his own in exchange. The founder of the city was Ilus, son of Tros, and from these mythical heroes it took its two names. But its walls were built by the grandson, Laomedon. He employed some remarkable workmen. In one of the most striking and suggestive fables of the Greek mythology, certain of the gods are represented as being condemned by Zeus (or Jupiter) to a period of servitude upon earth. Poseidon (Neptune) and Apollo were under this condemnation, and undertook, for certain rewards, to help Laomedon in his fortifications. But when the work was finished, the ungrateful king repudiated his bargain. As a punishment, a sea-monster is sent to ravage his dominions, who can only be appeased by the sacrifice of a maiden of noble blood. The lot falls upon the king's own daughter, Hesione. It is the original version of St George and the Dragon. Laomedon offers his daughter, and certain horses of immortal breed (which he seems to count even a more valuable prize), to the champion who will deliver her and slay the monster. Hercules comes to the rescue; but a second time Laomedon breaks his word. He substitutes mortal horses, and refuses his daughter. Hercules attacks the city, kills Laomedon, and carries off the princess Hesione, whom he gives to his comrade Telamon. From this union are born two heroes, Ajax and his brother Teucer, whom we shall meet in the second and great Siege of Troy, which forms the subject of Homer's Iliad.

This double perjury of Laomedon's is one supposed cause of the wrath of Heaven resting on the town and its people. Yet Apollo, forgetful, it would seem, of

his former unworthy treatment, and only remembering with affection the walls which he had helped to build, is represented as taking part with the Trojans in the great struggle, in which the deities of Olympus are bitterly divided amongst themselves.

But Homer's Tale of Troy says nothing of Laomedon and his broken faith. His poem is built upon a later legend. This legend embraces in the whole a period of thirty years, divided exactly, in a manner very convenient for both poet and reader, into complete decades; ten years of preparation for the siege, ten occupied in the siege itself (with which alone the Iliad has to do), and ten consumed in the weary wanderings and final return home of the surviving Greek heroes who had taken part in the expedition.

The first decade begins with the carrying off from the court of Menelaus, king of Sparta, of his wife Helen, by a young Asiatic prince whom he has entertained in his travels. Helen is the reputed daughter of Jupiter by Leda, and upon her Venus has bestowed the fatal endowment of matchless and irresistible beauty. The young prince whom she unhappily captivates is Paris or Alexander, son of Priam, king of Troy. Terrible oracles had accompanied the birth of him who was to prove the curse of his father's people. His mother Hecuba dreamed that she gave birth to a flaming brand. The child when born was exposed on Mount Ida, so as to insure his death in infancy without incurring the guilt of blood. But, as in similar legends, the precaution did but help to fulfil the prophecy. In the solitudes of the mountain he grew up, a boy of wondrous beauty, the nursling and the favourite of Venus. There he was called upon to decide

to whom the "Prize of Beauty"—the golden apple thrown by Discord into the feast of the Immortals, with that insidious legend inscribed on it—should be awarded. Three competing goddesses—Juno, Venus, and Minerva, who at least, as the goddess of wisdom, ought to have known better—appeared before the young shepherd in all the simplicity of immortal costume, in order that he might decide which of them was "the fairest." Each tried to bribe him to adjudge the prize to herself. The Queen of Heaven offered him power in the future; Minerva, wisdom; Venus, the loveliest woman upon earth. Paris chose the last. It was Helen; for Venus took it very little into her account that she had a husband already. It involved also, according to the most picturesque of the legends, a somewhat similar breach of troth on Paris's part. In the valleys of Ida he had already won the love of the nymph Œnone, but he deserts her without scruple under the new temptation.* He has learnt the secret of his royal birth, and is acknowledged by his father Priam. In spite of the warnings of his sister Cassandra, who has a gift of prophecy, and foresees evil from the expedition; in spite, too, of the forsaken Œnone's wild denunciations, he fits out ships and sets sail for Greece. Admitted as a guest to the hospitable court of Menelaus at Sparta, he charms both him and Helen by his many accomplishments. The king, gallant and unsuspicious, and of somewhat easy temperament, as appears from several passages of Homer, leaves him still an inmate of his palace, while he himself makes a

* It can hardly be necessary to do more than remind the reader how exquisitely this story is told in Tennyson's "Œnone."

voyage to Crete. In the husband's absence, Paris succeeds—not without some degree of violence, according to some of the legends—in carrying off the wife, loading his ships at the same time (to give emphatic baseness to the exploit) with a rich freight of gold and treasures, the spoils of his absent host. So Venus's promise is made good, and Priam weakly receives into his palace the fatal beauty who is to prove the ruin of the Trojan fortunes.

The outrage rouses all Greece to arms. Menelaus appeals to his brother Agamemnon, king of Argos and Mycenæ, who held some sort of suzerainty over the whole of Greece. The brother-kings were the sons of Atreus, of the great house of Pelops, who gave his name to the peninsula known as the Peloponnesus, and now the Morea. It was a house eminent for wealth and splendour and influence. According to an old proverb, valour and wisdom were given by the gods to other names in larger measure, but wealth and power belonged of divine right to the Atridæ. This power must not be hastily pronounced fabulous. There yet remain traces of the mural and sepulchral architecture of Agamemnon's capital, Mycenæ, which are strongly significant of a pre-historical civilisation — an "iron age" of massive strength and no mean resources.* Agamemnon, in Homer's poem, carries a sceptre which had literally, not metaphorically, come down to him as an heirloom from the king of the gods. Vulcan

* "Standing before the castle portal of Mycenæ, even he who knows nothing of Homer must imagine to himself a king like the Homeric Agamemnon, a warlike lord with army and fleet, who maintained relations with Asia, and her wealth of gold and arts."—Curtius's Hist. of Greece, i. 145.

himself had wrought it for Jupiter; Jupiter had given it to Hermes, Hermes to Pelops, and so it had been handed on. It was in some sort the prototype of those more than mortal weapons wielded by the heroes of medieval romance, which were one secret of their invincible prowess, and which had come from the hand of no human armourer; like the sword Durentaille, which belonged to Charlemagne, and was by him given to his nephew Roland; like Arthur's Excalibur; or the marvellous blade Recuite, which passed from the hands of Alexander the Great to Ptolemy, from Ptolemy to Judas Maccabæus, and so, through many intermediate owners, to the Emperor Vespasian. To the monarchs of the house of Pelops, then, belonged in uncommon degree "the divinity that doth hedge a king;" and Agamemnon is recognised, throughout the whole of the Homeric story, as pre-eminently "King of Men." But a terrible curse rested on the house — a curse connected with a revolting legend, which, as not recognised by Homer, needs no further notice here, but which was to find ample fulfilment in the sequel of Agamemnon's history.

The royal sons of Atreus take hasty counsel with such of the neighbouring kings and chiefs as they can collect, how they may avenge the wrong. One legend tells us that Tyndarus, the reputed father of Helen, before he gave her in marriage to Menelaus, had pledged all her suitors, among whom were the noblest names of Greece, to avenge any such attempt against the honour of the husband he should choose for her, whichever of them he might be: and that they now redeemed that pledge when called upon by the king of Sparta. Nestor, king of Pylos, and a chief named Palamedes, went

through the coasts of Greece, denouncing the perfidy of the foreign adventurer, and rousing the national feeling of the Greeks, or, as Homer prefers to call them, the Achæans. The chiefs did not all obey the summons willingly. Odysseus—better known to us under the Latin form of his name as Ulysses—king of the rocky island of Ithaca, feigned madness to escape from his engagement. But the shrewd Palamedes detected the imposture. He went to the field where the king, after the simple fashion of the times, was ploughing, carrying with him from the house his infant child Telemachus, and laid him down in the furrow which Ulysses was moodily driving, apparently insensible to all other sights and sounds. The father turned the plough aside, and his assumed madness was at once detected. In some cases, where there were several sons of military age in the same family, lots were cast for the unwelcome honour of serving against Troy. Some even sent bribes to Agamemnon to induce him to set them free from their engagement. Echepolus of Sicyon, loath to leave his vast possessions, sent to the great king his celebrated mare Œthe, the fleetest of her kind, as his personal ransom. The bribe was accepted, and Œthe went to Troy instead of her luxurious master. The story has been adduced in proof of Agamemnon's greediness in thus preferring private gain to the public interests: but no less a critic than Aristotle has sagaciously observed, that a good horse was a far more valuable conscript than an unwilling soldier. Some heroes, on the other hand, went resolutely to the war, though the fates foretold that they should never return from it alive. Euchenor of Corinth, though rich like Echepolus, could not be persuaded to remain at home,

even when his aged father, who was a seer himself, forewarned him of his doom; he boldly dared his fate, and fell at the close of the siege by the hand of Paris.

Under somewhat similar auguries the great hero of Homer's tale left his home for Troy. Achilles, said the legends, was the son of the ocean-goddess Thetis by a mortal lover, Peleus son of Æacus. The gods had honoured the marriage with their personal presence—

> "For in that elder time, when truth and worth
> Were still revered and cherished here on earth,
> The tenants of the skies would oft descend
> To heroes' spotless homes, as friend to friend;
> There meet them face to face, and freely share
> In all that stirred the hearts of mortals there." *

The Roman poet Catullus tells us in the same beautiful ode, how mortals and immortals alike brought their wedding gifts: Chiron the centaur ("that divine beast," as Pindar calls him) comes from the mountains laden with coronals of flowers for the banquet, and Peneus, the Thessalian river-god, brings whole trees of beech and bay and cypress to shade the guests. Even the three weird sisters, the inexorable Fates, tune their voices for this once into a nuptial hymn, and while their spindles "run and weave the threads of doom," they chant the future glories of the child that shall be born from this auspicious union. Neptune presents the fortunate bridegroom with two horses of divine breed—Xanthus and Balius—and Chiron gives him a wondrous ashen spear. Both these gifts passed after-

* Catullus's Nuptials of Peleus and Thetis (transl. by Theodore Martin).

wards as heirlooms to Achilles, the offspring of this marriage, and were carried by him to Troy.

Achilles is the very model of a hero, such as heroes would be accounted in times when the softer and nobler qualities of true heroism were unknown. Strong and beautiful in person, as a goddess-born should be; haughty, and prompt to resent insult, but gallant and generous; passionate alike in his love and in his hate; a stanch friend, and a bitter enemy. He is the prototype of Sir Lancelot in many points—"the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights—the truest friend to his lover that ever bestrod horse—the sternest man to his mortal foe that ever put spear in rest." The epithet which Homer himself gives him is precisely that which was given to the English king who was held to be the flower of chivalry—"Lion-heart." Though in personal strength and speed of foot he excels all the other heroes of the expedition, yet he is not a mere fighter, like his comrade Ajax, but has all the finer tastes and accomplishments of an age which, however fierce and barbarous in many respects, shows yet a high degree of civilisation. Music and song beguile for him the intervals of battle, and, whether indignant, sarcastic, or pathetic, he is always an admirable speaker. There is something of a melancholy interest about him, too, not inappropriate to a hero of romance, which the poet never allows us to forget. He has come to Troy with his doom upon him, and he knows it. His goddess-mother has told him that there is a twofold destiny possible for him: either to live in wealth and peace, and such happiness as they can bring, a long life of inglorious ease in his native land of Phthia, or to embrace in foreign warfare a brief career

of victory, a warrior's death, and undying glory. He makes his choice as a hero should—

> "One crowded hour of glorious life
> Is worth an age without a name."

One fable runs that his mother, Thetis, dipped him when an infant in the river Styx, which made him invulnerable in every point except the heel, by which she held him:* but there is no mention of this in the Iliad, and he goes into battle, for all that appears, as liable to wounds and death as any other mortal warrior, and with a presentiment that the last awaits him before the capture of Troy is complete.

At length the ten years' preparations were all completed. The harbour of Aulis on the coast of Bœotia was the place fixed for the rendezvous. From every quarter where the great race of the Achæans had settled,—from the wooded valleys of Thessaly, from all the coasts of the Peloponnesus, and the neighbouring islands, from Ithaca and Cephallenia on the west to Crete and Rhodes on the east—the chiefs and their following were gathered. A hundred ships—long half-decked row-galleys, whose average complement was about eighty men—were manned from Agamemnon's own kingdom of Mycenæ, and he supplied also sixty more to carry the contingent of the Arcadians, who, as an inland people, had no fleet of their own. His brother Menelaus brought sixty; Nestor of Pylos,

* The legend bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the hero Siegfried, in the German 'Nibelungen Lied.' By bathing in the blood of the slain dragon he acquires the same property of invulnerability, with the exception of one spot on his back which had been kept dry by a fallen leaf. And he meets his death, like Achilles, by a wound in that spot, dealt treacherously.

ninety; Idomeneus of Crete, and Diomed of Argos, eighty each. Ulysses and Ajax did but contribute each twelve galleys; but the leaders were a host in themselves. In all there were twelve hundred vessels, carrying above 100,000 men. With the exception of the chiefs and two or three officials attached to each galley, such as the helmsman and the steward, all on board were rowers when at sea, and fighting-men on land. The expedition has been well termed a secular crusade. It was undertaken, as modern politicians would say, "for an idea;" not for conquest, but for a point of honour. It might be questioned, indeed, how far the object was worth the cost. There was at least one of the neighbouring kings who at the time took a very unromantic and utilitarian view of the matter. Poltis, king of Thrace, was applied to amongst the rest for his assistance. He inquired into the cause of the expedition; and when he heard it, he suggested an arrangement which might accommodate all differences without the necessity of an appeal to arms. "It is hard," he said, "for Menelaus to lose a wife: yet very probably Paris wanted one. Now I have two wives, whom I can well spare; I will send one to Menelaus, and the other to Paris; and so all parties will be satisfied." But we might have lost the Iliad if his counsel had been taken.

The great host set sail; but the first time, says the legend, they missed their way. They mistook a part of the coast called Teuthrania for the plains of Troy; and then, re-embarking, were driven by a storm back to the shores of Greece. A second time they made their rendezvous at Aulis; but Agamemnon had incurred the anger of Diana, and the fleet lay wind-bound

for many weeks. It was then that deed of purest tragedy was done, which, though it forms no part of Homer's story, has been so often the subject of song, of painting, and of sculpture, and has received so many illustrations in modern literature, that it must find place here. The king is informed by the oracle that the wrath of Heaven can only be appeased by the sacrifice of his virgin daughter Iphianassa, or as she is more commonly called, Iphigenia. Reluctantly, and only after a bitter struggle with his feelings, urged by the importunate clamour of the whole army, and in obedience to his conception of his duties as their chief, the father consented. The story is immortalised by the anecdote told of Timanthes, the painter of Sicyon, when competing with a rival in a picture of the sacrifice. The point of admitted difficulty with both the competitors was to portray the agony in the father's features at the moment when the sacrificing priest was about to strike the fatal blow. The great artist represented the king as wrapping his face in the folds of his mantle, and was at once pronounced the winner of the prize. Mr Tennyson—never more successful than when he draws his inspiration from the old classical sources—has made tasteful use of both legend and anecdote in his 'Dream of Fair Women.' It is Iphigenia who speaks :—

"I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
Which yet to name my spirit loathes and fears :
My father held his hand upon his face ;
I, blinded with my tears,

"Still strove to speak : my voice was thick with sighs,
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see me die.

"The tall masts quivered as they lay afloat,
The temples and the people and the shore;
One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat,
Slowly,—and nothing more."

There was, however, a less harrowing version of the legend. As in the parallel case of Jephtha's daughter, there were found interpreters who could not bear that the sacrifice should be carried out. They said that in mercy Diana substituted a fawn, and carried off the maiden to serve her as a priestess in perpetual maidenhood at her shrine in the Tauric Chersonese. It is this version of the tale which the Greek tragedian Euripides has followed in his "Iphigenia in Aulis." Racine, in his tragedy, avails himself of a third version of the catastrophe. The victim whom Calchas' oracle demands must be a princess of the blood of Helen. This Agamemnon's daughter was—her mother Clytemnestra being Helen's sister. But at the last moment another Iphigenia is found, offspring of a previous secret marriage of Helen with Theseus. The French tragedian, following Euripides in representing the princess as promised in marriage to Achilles, has given the necessary amount of romance to the *denouement* by introducing the hero as an impetuous lover of the modern type, surrounding the altar with his faithful Myrmidons, and vowing that Calchas himself shall be the first victim—until the old soothsayer hits upon the expedient of a satisfactory substitute.

The wrath of Diana is appeased, the favouring gales are granted, and once more the Greek armament sets sail. They break their voyage at the island of Tenedos; and from thence Menelaus, accompanied by Ulysses, who is the diplomatist of the army, proceeds to Troy to

make a final demand for reparation. Even now, if the Trojans will give back Helen and the treasures, the Greeks will be satisfied. But the terms were rejected, though the reception of the embassy at Troy seems to mark a high state of civilisation. So the expedition proceeds: but before they make good their landing on the Trojan coast, the Fates demand another victim. The oracle had said that the first who set foot on Trojan soil must fall. There was a hesitation even among the bravest of the Greeks, and the Trojans and their allies were lining the shore. Protesilaus of Phylacè, with a gallant disregard of omens, leapt to land, and fell, first of his countrymen, by a Dardanian spear—launched, as one legend has it, by the noble hand of Hector. Homer has a pathetic touch in his mention of him:—

> "Unfinished his proud palaces remain,
> And his sad consort beats her breast in vain."

On this slight foundation the Roman poet, Ovid, has constructed one of the sweetest of his imaginary 'Epistles'—that of the wife Laodamia to the husband of whom she complains as sending no message home, undreaming that he had long since found a grave on the soil of Troy. A later legend tells us that she wearied the gods with prayers and tears, by night and day, to obtain permission to see her husband once again on earth. The boon was granted: for the space of three hours the dead hero was allowed to revisit his home, and Laodamia died in his embrace. There is a poetic sequel to the tradition, preserved by Pliny,* and thus beautifully rendered in the concluding lines of Wordsworth's 'Laodamia:'—

* Nat. Hist., xvi. 44.

"Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died;
And ever, when such stature they had gained
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
The trees' tall summits withered at the sight—
A constant interchange of growth and blight!"

The Trojans, too, had their allies, who came to their aid, when the invasion was imminent, from the neighbouring tribes of Mysia, Caria, Phrygia, and even the coast towns of Thrace. The most renowned of these auxiliary chiefs were Sarpedon, who led the Lycian troops, and Æneas, commander of the Dardanians. Both claimed an immortal descent: Æneas was the son of Venus by a human lover, Anchises, and sprung from a branch of the royal house of Troy: Sarpedon's father was no less than Jupiter himself. Next after Hector, the most warlike, but not the eldest of the sons of Priam, these are the most illustrious names on the side of the Trojans in Homer's story. But the force of the invaders was too strong to allow their adversaries to keep the open field. Soon they were driven inside the walls of the city, while the Greeks ravaged all the neighbouring coast almost unopposed, and maintained themselves at the enemy's cost. Then began the weary siege which wasted the hopes and resources of both armies for ten long years. To the long night-watches round the camp-fires of the Greeks we are indebted—so the legends say—for at least one invention which has enlivened many a waste hour since, and also, it perhaps may be said, has wasted some hours for its more enthusiastic admirers. Palamedes, to cheer the flagging spirits of his countrymen, invented for them,

among other pastimes, the nobler game of chess; and kings and castles, knights and pawns, still move in illustration of the greater game which was then being played on the plains of Troy. The inventor met with but an ungrateful return, according to one gloomy legend—which, however, is not Homer's. Ulysses had never forgiven him the detection of the pretence of madness by which he had sought himself to escape the service; nor could he bear so close a rival in what he considered his own exclusive field of subtlety and stratagem. He took the occasion of a fishing expedition to plunge the unfortunate chief overboard.

So much of preface seems almost necessary to enable any reader to whom the Greek mythology is not already familiar ground, to take up Homer's tale with some such previous acquaintance with the subject as the bard himself would have given him credit for. The want of it has sometimes made the study of the Iliad less interesting and less intelligent than it should have been, even to those who have approached it with some knowledge of the original language.

The galleys of the Greeks, when they reached the Trojan coast, were all drawn up on shore, as was their invariable custom at the end of a voyage, and kept in an upright position by wooden shores. The crews, with the exception of some two or three "ship-keepers" for each galley, disembarked, and formed some kind of encampment near their respective vessels. Achilles' station was on one wing, and that of Ajax on the other; these points of danger being assigned to the leaders of highest repute for valour. The chiefs fought in war-chariots of very light construction, on

two wheels and open at the back. These were drawn by two—or sometimes three—horses, and carried two persons, both standing; the fighter, armed with sword and shield, and one or two long spears which were usually hurled at the enemy—and his charioteer, usually a friend of nearly equal rank. The fighters in most cases dismounted from their chariots when they came to close quarters, their charioteers attending on their movements. The combatants of lower degree fought on foot. There is no mention of cavalry.

# THE ILIAD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE QUARREL OF AGAMEMNON AND ACHILLES.

ADOPTING for himself a method which has since become a rule of art, more or less acknowledged in the literature of fiction, the poet dashes off at once into the full action of his story. He does not ask his readers or hearers to accompany the great armament over sea from the shores of Greece, or give them the history of the long and weary siege. He plunges at one leap into the tenth year of the war. He assumes from the outset, on the part of those to whom he speaks, a general knowledge of the main plot of his poem, and of the characters represented: just as the modern author of a novel or a poem on the Civil Wars of England would assume some general acquaintance with the history of Charles I., the character of Cromwell, and the breach between King and Commons. Nine whole years are supposed to have already passed in desultory warfare; but for the details of these campaigns the modern reader has to go to other sources, with which

also the original hearers are supposed to have been acquainted. The Trojans and their allies are cooped up within the walls of their city, while the Greek hero Achilles has spread the terror of his name far and wide.

The poet's exordium is of the very briefest. His invocation to the goddess of song is in just three words :—

"Sing, heavenly muse, the wrath of Peleus' son."

We have here the key-note of the poem brought before us in the very first line—nay, in the very first word, according to the original, for "wrath" stands first in the Greek, which it cannot very conveniently do in the English. The two great heroes of the Greek chivalry, Agamemnon and Achilles, always jealous of each other, come to an open quarrel in full council of the princes of the League. Their quarrel is—like the original cause of the war, like so many quarrels before and since—about a woman, a beautiful captive. A fatal pestilence is raging in the camp. The Sun-god, Apollo, is angry. To him and to his twin-sister Diana, the Moon, all mysterious diseases were attributed—not without some sufficient reasons, in a hot climate. Pestilence and disease were the arrows of Apollo and Diana. Therefore the Greeks have no doubt as to the author of the present calamity. It is "the god of the silver bow" who is sending his swift shafts of death amongst them. The poet's vision even sees the dread Archer in bodily shape. It is a fine picture; the English reader will lose little of its beauty in Lord Derby's version :—

"Along Olympus' heights he passed, his heart
Burning with wrath; behind his shoulders hung
His bow and ample quiver; at his back

Rattled the fateful arrows as he moved.
Like the night-cloud he passed, and from afar
He bent against the ships, and sped the bolt;
And fierce and deadly twanged the silver bow.
First on the mules and dogs, on man the last,
Was poured the arrowy storm; and through the camp
Constant and numerous blazed the funeral-fires."

In their misery the Greeks appeal to their soothsayer Calchas, to divine for them the cause of the god's displeasure. The Mantis or soothsayer, whose skill was in most cases supposed to be hereditary, accompanied a Greek force on all its expeditions; and no prudent general would risk a battle, or engage in any important enterprise, without first ascertaining from this authority the will of the gods, as shadowed out in certain appearances of the sacrifice, or some peculiarity in the flight of birds, or some phenomena of the heavens. In this particular expedition it would appear that Calchas had turned the last branch of his art to good purpose; it must have been his knowledge of the stars which had enabled him, as Homer tells us, to pilot the great fleet from their own shores to Troy. He confesses that he can read the secret of Apollo's present wrath; but he hesitates to tell it, dreading, he says, lest he should thereby anger the "great chief whom the whole host obeys." Achilles charges him to speak out boldly without fear or favour; none shall harm him—not even if he should denounce Agamemnon himself as the cause of this visitation, adds the hero, gladly seizing the opportunity of hurling a defiance at his great rival. Thus supported, the seer speaks out; Agamemnon is indeed the guilty cause. In a late foray he had taken captive the maiden daughter of

Chryses, a priest of the Sun-god, and the father had come to the camp of the invaders as a suppliant, pleading the sanctity of his office, and offering a fitting ransom. The great king had refused to listen, had sent him away with bitter words and threats; and the priest had prayed to his god to punish the insult: hence the pestilence. Immediately the popular voice—expressed loudly through Achilles—demands the maiden's instant restitution to her father. Agamemnon, though burning with indignation alike against the seer and his champion, dares not refuse. His prerogative, however generally admitted and respected by the confederate army, is dependent in such extremities on the popular will. He promises at once to send back the daughter of Chryses unharmed and without ransom. But at the same time, after a stormy and bitter dispute with Achilles, he announces his intention to insist on that chief resigning, by way of exchange, a fair captive named Briseis, carried off in some similar raid, who had been awarded to him as his share of the public spoil. To this insolent demand the majority of the council of chiefs, content with their victory on the main question, appear to raise no objection. But Achilles—his impetuous nature roused to madness by the studied insult—leaps up and half unsheathes his sword. Even then—such is the Greek's reverence for authority—he hesitates; and as he stands with his hand upon the hilt, there sweeps down from Olympus* Pallas Athene (Minerva), the goddess of

* The mythology of Homer supposes the gods to dwell in an aërial city on Mount Olympus (in the north-east of Thessaly), whose summit was always veiled in cloud, and from which there was imagined to be an opening into the heavens.

wisdom, sent by Here (Juno) Queen of Heaven to check this fatal strife between her favourite Greeks. The celestial messenger is visible to Achilles alone. She calms the hero's wrath so far as to restrain him from any act of violence; but, as she disappears, he turns on his enemy, and swears a mighty oath—the royal oath of kings—by the golden-studded staff, or "sceptre," which was borne by king, priest, and judge as the emblem of their authority. Pope's rendering has all the fire of the original, and the additional touches which he throws in are at least in a kindred spirit:—

> "By this I swear, when bleeding Greece again
> Shall call Achilles, she shall call in vain:
> When flushed with slaughter Hector comes to spread
> The purpled shore with mountains of the dead,
> Then shalt thou mourn th' affront thy madness gave,
> Forced to deplore, when impotent to save;
> Then rage in bitterness of soul, to know
> This act has made the bravest Greek thy foe."

He dashes his sceptre on the ground, and sits down in savage silence. Agamemnon is ready enough to return the taunt, when there rises in the assembly a venerable figure, whose grey hairs and tried sagacity in council command at once the respect of all. It is Nestor, the hoary-headed chieftain of the rocky Pylos in the Peloponnese—known in his more vigorous days as "the horse-tamer," and, in sooth, not a little proud of his past exploits. Two generations of men he has already outlived in his own dominions, and is now loved and respected by the third. He has joined the great armament still sound in wind and limb; but he is valued now not so much for his

> "Red hand in the foray,"

as for his

"Sage counsel in cumber."

He can clothe this counsel, too, in winning words. The stream of eloquence that flowed from his lips, says the poet, was "sweeter than honey." He gently reproves both disputants for their unseemly strife—a shame to the Greeks, a triumph to the enemy. His words ring like the lament of David over the suicide of Saul—"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice."

"Alas, deep sorrow on our land doth fall!
Yet shall on Priam and his sons alight
Hope, and a great joy on the Trojans all,
Hearing ye waste in bitter feud your might,
Ye twain, our best in counsel and in fight." (W.)

He proceeds to tell them something of his own long experience, by way of claim on their attention—with something also, as critics have noticed, of an old man's garrulity. But the reader, it should be remembered, really wants to know something about him, even if the Greeks may have been supposed to have heard his story before.

"In times past
I lived with men—and they despised me not—
Abler in counsel, greater than yourselves.
Such men I never saw and ne'er shall see,
As Pirithous and Dryas, wise and brave,
And Theseus, Œgeus' more than mortal son.
The mightiest they among the sons of men,
The mightiest they, and of the forest beasts
Strove with the mightiest, and their rage subdued.
With them I played my part; with them, not one
Would dare to fight of mortals now on earth.
Yet they my counsels heard, my voice obeyed;
And hear ye also—for my words are wise." (D.)

The angry chiefs do hear him so far, that after the interchange of a few more passionate words they leave the council. Achilles stalks off gloomily to his tent, accompanied by his faithful friend and henchman, Patroclus (of whom we shall hear more), and followed by his retinue. Agamemnon proceeds at once to carry out his resolution. He despatches a galley with a trusty crew, under the command of the sage Ulysses, to the island of Chrysa, to restore the old priest's daughter to him in all honour, with expiatory presents, and the offer of a hecatomb to the Sun-god. They make the voyage quickly, and arrive safely at the island. The rapid movement here of Homer's verse has rarely been more happily rendered than in the English hexameters of Mr Landon:—

"Out were the anchors cast, and the ropes made fast to the steerage;
Out did the sailors leap on the foaming beach of the ocean;
Out was the hecatomb led for the skilful marksman Apollo;
Out Chryseis arose from the ship that sped through the waters."

So, by the good priest's prayers, the god is propitiated, and the plague in the Greek host is stayed.

Meanwhile another embassy, on a very different errand, has been despatched by the King of Men to the tents where Achilles lies, hard by his ships, with his fierce bands of Myrmidons encamped around him. Their name has passed into a by-word, being commonly but incorrectly used to designate an unscrupulous rabble of followers, to whom their leader's word is law. The notion must be derived not from Homer, but from Pope. In his version of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, he makes the former say to his antagonist—

"Go, threat thine earth-born Myrmidons; but here
'Tis mine to threaten, prince, and thine to fear."

But to suppose that the Myrmidons were subservient to any man's threats, is to give them a very different character from what we find in Homer. Even the epithet "earth-born," which is Pope's, not Homer's, and which may easily be misunderstood, they would have prized as a high compliment, implying that they were no new race, but the aboriginal possessors of their native soil; just as the proud Athenians wore the "golden grasshopper" in their hair, because that insect was fabled to owe its birth to the spontaneous action of the earth. The followers of Achilles were indeed "fierce as ravening wolves," as the poet has afterwards described them; but they were the very flower of the Greek army, troops of whom any leader might be proud, and if they had a wolfish thirst for blood, they were no worse and no better in this respect than Achilles himself, or any captain in the host before Troy; for an insatiable ferocity, when once the spirit of combativeness is aroused, is the characteristic of all Homer's heroes, as in those of the medieval romances.

The purpose of the king's embassy to Achilles is, of course, in pursuance of his threat, to demand the surrender of the fair Briseis. Such a message to such a man is no very safe or agreeable errand. But Agamemnon chooses his envoys well. He sends two heralds—Eurybates and Talthybius. The herald's office, in early Greek warfare, had an especial sanctity. Those who held it were not mere officials whose name protected them, but men of noble and even of royal birth, who might have been captains of thousands themselves, if they had not chosen, as it were, the civilian's place

in warfare. Such diplomacy as there was room for in those ages was transacted by them. They were under the special protection of Zeus, as the god of oaths and treaties. There was no fear that the noble chief of the Myrmidons, even in his most furious mood, would treat such envoys rudely. But in fact his reception of them is one of the most remarkable scenes in the poem, both from its high-toned courtesy and from its strong contrast with the hero's previous bearing towards Agamemnon. Achilles receives the heralds of the king much as a well-bred gentleman of fifty years ago would have received the "friend" who carried a hostile message from one with whom he had a deadly quarrel a few hours before. The demand which they brought from Agamemnon was pointed with the additional threat that, if he refused to give up the damsel, the king would come himself and carry her off by the strong hand,—a threat almost brutal, because quite unwarranted; since Achilles had declared in the council that if the Greeks, who had awarded her as his battle-prize, chose to acquiesce in the injustice of demanding her back from him, *he* should make no resistance. But it does not seem that the heralds delivered themselves of the additional insult which they were charged to convey. They had no need. As they stand at the entrance of his tent, "troubled and awe-stricken," loath to begin their unwelcome tale, Achilles sets them at their ease at once in a few calm and dignified words. He recognises in them "the messengers of Zeus"—and if now by accident of Agamemnon, the offence is his, not theirs. He at once bids Patroclus lead forth the damsel, and gives her into their custody, to deal with according to their orders. He repeats his oath, how-

ever, though in calmer terms; and calls them to witness before heaven that Agamemnon, in his day of need, shall look in vain for the saving arm of the man he has insulted.

`It is something in favour of a tender side to the hero's character, that the "fair-cheeked" Briseis, spoil of war though she was, parts from him very reluctantly. Achilles, for his share, fairly weeps: but not the most romantic reader of the story dares nurse the idea that it is for his Briseis. They who bring with them, to the pages of classical fiction, a taste which has been built up by modern song and romance, must be warned at once that there is no love-story in either Iliad or Odyssey. Indeed, one remarkable point of difference between the imaginative writers of antiquity and those of our own days, lies in the absence of that which is the motive and the key-note of five-sixths of our modern tales in prose and verse. Love between unmarried persons, in the sense in which we commonly use the word, seems very much the product of modern civilisation. There is indeed a passion which we name by the same English word—the mere animal passion, which Homer, to do him justice, deals with but as a matter of fact, and never paints in attractive colours. There is again a love of another kind—the love of the husband for his wife and of the wife for her husband —which the old poet also well understood, and which furnishes him with scenes of the highest pathos and beauty. But as to the sentiment which forms the common staple of modern romance and drama, Homer certainly did not know what it meant, nor Achilles or Briseis either. As for the latter, if she shed tears, it was no doubt because she had found in Achilles a

kind and generous lord and master, who had made her captive lot (which might chance to come to the turn of any lady or princess in those warlike times) as tolerable as such a life could be; and because Agamemnon —if she had heard his character from Achilles—did not promise a very favourable change in that respect.

Achilles weeps—but not for Briseis. He is touched in a point where he is far more sensitive—his honour. He has been robbed of the guerdon of valour, bestowed on him in full conclave of the chiefs of the army. He has been robbed of it by Agamemnon—the man for whose especial sake, to avenge whose family wrongs, he has come on this long expedition from his home. This was his indignant protest in their dispute at the council—

> "Well dost thou know that 'twas no feud of mine
> With Troy's brave sons, that brought me here in arms;
> They never did *me* wrong; they never drove
> My cattle, or my horses; never sought
> In Phthia's fertile life-sustaining fields
> To waste the crops; for wide between us lay
> The shadowy mountains and the roaring sea.
> With thee, O void of shame! with thee we sailed,
> For Menelaüs and for thee, ingrate,
> Glory and fame on Trojan crests to win." (D.)

And now this is his reward! And the whole Greek army, too, have made themselves partakers in the wrong, inasmuch as they have tamely looked on, and allowed the haughty king thus to override honour, gratitude, and justice. His indignation is intense. He wanders away, and sits alone on the sea-beach, "gazing vacantly on the illimitable ocean." Soon there comes a change upon his spirit; and now, with a childlike petulance—these Homeric heroes, with all their fierce ways, are still so very childlike, and therefore so human

and so interesting—he cries to his mother. True, that mother is, as we remember, a goddess—Thetis, daughter of the great Jupiter, and of potent influence in the waters beneath the earth. To her he bemoans himself. That his days were to be few, he knew when he came here to Troy; but she had promised him undying renown. It has failed him: his "one crowded hour of glorious life" is darkened in dishonour. He cries, and his goddess-mother hears him—

> "Beside her aged father where she sat,
> In the deep ocean-caves."

It is the original of our own Milton's beautiful invocation in Comus—the rough simple outline on which he has painted with a grace and fulness which make it all his own—

> "Sabrina fair!
> Listen, where thou art sitting
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
> In twisted braids of lilies knitting
> The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
> Listen for dear honour's sake,
> Goddess of the silver lake,
> Listen, and save!"

Thetis hears, and rises on the sea—"like as it were a mist"—(the "White Lady of Avenel") caresses him soothingly with her hand, as though the stalwart warrior were still a child indeed, and asks him the simple question which all mothers, goddesses or not, would put into much the same words—"My son, why weepest thou?" He tells his tale of wrong; and she proceeds to give him, in the first place, advice certainly not wiser than that of some earthly mothers. She does not advise him to make up his quarrel with Agamem-

non, but to nurse his wrath, and withdraw himself wholly from the siege. She, meanwhile, will intercede with Jupiter, and beseech him to grant the Trojans victory for a while, that so the Greeks may learn to feel the loss of the hero whom they have insulted.

There is an obstacle, however, in the way of the immediate performance of her promise — a ludicrous obstacle, to our modern taste, though the poet does not so intend it. The King of the Gods has gone out to dinner—or rather to a continuous festival of twelve days, to which he has been invited by "the blameless Ethiopians;"* a race with whom the Immortals of Olympus have some mysterious connection, which has been held to imply an Eastern origin for the Greek religion and race. With the dawn of the twelfth morning, however, Thetis presents herself in the "brazen-floored" halls of Jupiter, and we are introduced to the Olympian court and household. A strange picture it is—such a travesty of a divine life as makes us wonder what the poet himself really conceived of the gods of his adoption. The life of mortal heroes in the world below is grandeur and nobleness itself compared with that of the Olympian heaven. Its pleasures indeed are much the same — those of sensual gratification; the feast, the wine-cup, music and song, are what gods and goddesses delight in as much as those whom the poet pathetically calls "the creatures of a day." But all their passions are incomparably meaner. The wrath

* Why specially "blameless?" has been sometimes asked. The author of the 'Mill on the Floss' suggests that it was because they lived so far off that they had no neighbours to criticise them.

of Achilles is dignified—Juno's anger against Troy is mere vicious spite. The subtle craft of Ulysses is at least exercised for the benefit of his countrymen and their cause; but the shifty counsels of Jupiter are the mere expedients of a cunning despot who, between queen and ministers and favourites, finds it difficult, in spite of his despotism, to have his own way. The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles is tragedy: the domestic wrangles of the Thunderer and his queen are in the very spirit of low comedy, and not even the burlesques of Life in Olympus, which some years ago were popular on our English stage, went far beyond the recognised legends of mythology. In fact, the comic element, what little there is of it in the Iliad, is supplied (with the single exception of the incident of Thersites) by the powers whom the poet recognises as divinities. The idea of rival wills and influences existing in the supernatural world led the poet necessarily to represent his gods as quarrelling; and quarrels in a primitive age are perhaps hardly compatible with dignity. But the conception of gods in human shape has always a tendency to monstrosities and caricature. How close, too, the supernatural and the grotesque seem to lie together may be seen even in the existing sculptures and carvings of ancient Christendom, and still more remarkably in the old Miracle-Plays, which mix buffoonery with the most sacred subjects in a manner which it is hard to reconcile with any real feeling of reverence.

Thetis throws herself at the feet of her father Jupiter, and begs of him, as a personal favour, the temporary humiliation of Agamemnon and his Greeks. For a while the Thunderer is silent, and hesitates; Thetis

perseveringly clings to his knees. At last he confides to her his dread lest a compliance with her petition should involve him in domestic difficulties.

> " Sad work thou mak'st, in bidding me oppose
> My will to Juno's, when her bitter words
> Assail me, for full oft amid the gods
> She taunts me that I aid the Trojan cause.
> But thou return—*that Juno see thee not*—
> And leave to me the furtherance of thy suit." (D.)

He pledges his promise to her, and ratifies it with the mighty nod that shakes Olympus—a solemn confirmation which made his word irrevocable.

> " Waved on th' immortal head th' ambrosial locks,
> And all Olympus trembled at his nod."

Critics have somewhat over-praised the grandeur of the image; but it is said that the great sculptor Phidias referred to it as having furnished him with the idea of his noble statue of Olympian Jove. Satisfied with her success, Thetis plunges down from high Olympus into the sea, and the Thunderer proceeds to take his place in full council of the gods, as calm as if nothing had happened. But there are watchful eyes about him which he has not escaped. Juno has been a witness of the interview, and has a shrewd suspicion of its object. A connubial dialogue ensues, which, though the poet has thought fit to transfer the scene of it to Olympus, is of an exceedingly earthly, and what we should now call " realistic," type. Homer's recognised translators have not condescended to give it the homely tone of the original. Pope is grandiloquent, and Lord Derby calmly dignified; but Homer intends to be neither. Mr Gladstone's translation comes nearest the

spirit of the Greek. The brief encounter between the king and queen of the Immortals is cut short by the former in rather summary fashion. "Thou hast been promising honour to Achilles, I trow," says Juno.

"Zeus that rolls the clouds of heaven
'Moonstruck! thou art ever *trowing*;
After all, it boots thee nothing;
So thou hast the worser bargain.
It was done because I willed it.
Lest, if I come near, and on thee
All the gods that hold Olympus
her addressing answered then;
never I escape thy ken.
leaves thee of my heart the less:
What if I the fact confess?
Hold thy peace—my word obey,
these unconquered hands I lay,
nought avail thee here to-day.'"*

He bids her, in very plain Greek, sit down and hold her tongue; and gives her clearly to understand—with a threat of violence which is an unusual addition to his many failings as a husband—that it is his fixed intention, on this occasion, to be lord and master, not only of Olympus, but of his wife. Juno is silenced, and the whole assembly of the gods is startled by the Thunderer's violence. Vulcan, the fire-god—the lame brawny hunchback, always more or less the jester and the butt of the court of Olympus, but with more brains in his head than most of his straight-limbed compeers—Vulcan comes to the general relief. He soothes his royal mother by the argument, that it were ill indeed to break the peace of heaven for the sake of two or three wretched mortals: and he reminds her—we must suppose in an aside—that they both knew by bitter experience that when the father of gods and men *did* choose to put forth his might, it went hard with all who resisted.

"When to thy succour once before I came,
He seized me by the foot, and hurled me down
From heaven's high threshold; all the day I fell,

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* Translations, 1863.

> And with the setting sun on Lemnos' isle
> Lighted, scarce half-alive ; there was I found,
> And by the Sintian people kindly nursed." (D.)

He gives the mother-goddess further comfort—in "a double cup," which he proceeds also to hand round the whole of the august circle. They quaff their nectar with unusual zest, as they break into peals of laughter (it must be confessed, rather ungratefully) at the hobbling gait and awkward attentions of their new cup-bearer :—

> " Thus they till sunset passed the festive hours ;
> Nor lacked the banquet aught to please the sense,
> Nor sound of tuneful lyre by Phœbus touched,
> Nor Muses' voice, who in alternate strains
> Responsive sung ; but when the sun had set
> Each to his home departed, where for each
> The crippled Vulcan, matchless architect,
> With wondrous skill a noble house had reared."

And so, at the end of the first book of the poem, the curtain falls on the Olympian happy family.

But Jupiter has but a wakeful night. He is planning how he may best carry out his promise to Thetis. He sends a lying spirit in a dream to Agamemnon at midnight. The vision stands at the head of the king's couch, taking the shape of old Nestor. In this character it encourages him to muster all his forces to storm the city of Troy on the morrow. Now, at last, the false phantom assures him, its walls are doomed to fall ; the strife in heaven is ended ; Juno's counsels have prevailed, and the fate of Troy is sealed irrevocably.

Joyfully the King of Men arises from his sleep, and summons at daybreak a council of the chiefs. Already, says the poet, he storms and sacks the royal city in

imagination, little foreseeing the long and bloody struggle that lies yet between him and his prey. In the council he invents a stratagem of his own, which complicates the story considerably without improving it. He suspects the temper of his army; and before he makes up his mind to lead them to the assault, he seeks to ascertain whether or no the long ten years' siege has worn out their patience and broken their spirit. He will try the dangerous experiment of proposing to them to break up the siege and embark at once for home. He himself will make the proposal to the whole army; the other leaders, for their part, are to oppose such a base retreat, and urge their followers to make yet another effort for the national honour of Greece.

The clans, at the summons of their several chiefs, muster in their thousands from tents and ships; and Agamemnon, seated on his throne of state, the immortal sceptre in his hand, harangues them in accordance with his preconcerted stratagem. He paints in lively colours the weariness of the nine years' siege, his own disappointed hopes, the painful yearning of their long-deserted wives and children for the return of their husbands and fathers; and ends by proposing an immediate re-embarkation for home. He plays his part only too successfully. The immense host heaves and sways with excitement at his words—"like the long waves of the Icarian Sea, like the deep tall corn-crop as the summer wind sweeps over it"—and with tumultuous shouts of exultation they rush down to their galleys and begin at once to launch them; so little regard have the multitude for glory, so strong is their yearning for home. It is possible that the poet is no

unconscious satirist, and that he willingly allowed his hearers to draw, if they pleased, the inference which he hints in more than one passage, that war is the sport of princes, for which the masses pay the cost.

But Juno's ever-watchful eyes have marked the movement. Again Minerva is her messenger, and shoots down from Olympus to stop this disgraceful flight. She addresses herself to the ear of the sage Ulysses, who knows her voice at once. Wisdom speaks to the wise,—if any reader prefers the moral allegory to the simple fiction. Ulysses is standing fixed in disgust and despair at the cowardice of his countrymen. The goddess bids him use all his eloquence to check their flight. Without a word he flings off his cloak,* and meeting Agamemnon, receives the immortal sceptre from his hand, and armed with this staff of authority rushes down to the galleys. Any king or chieftain whom he encounters he hastily reminds of the secret understanding which had been the result of the previous council, and urges them, at least, to set a braver example. To the plebeian crowd he uses argument of another kind. He applies the royal sceptre to them in one of its primitive uses, as a rod of correction, and bids them wait for orders from their superiors. Easily swayed to either course, the crowd are awed into quiet by his energetic remonstrances. One popular orator alone lifts his well-known voice loudly in defiance. It is a certain

* It may be satisfactory to a matter-of-fact reader to know that Eurybates, his attendant, takes care of it. The old Greek bard is much more particular on such points than modern novelists, who make even their heroines take sudden journeys without (apparently) having any chance of carrying with them so much as a *sac-de-nuit*.

Thersites, of whom the poet gives a sketch, brief enough, but with so many marks of individuality, that we may be justified in looking at him as a character drawn from life.

> "The ugliest man was he who came to Troy,
> With squinting eyes and one distorted foot,
> His shoulders round, and buried in his breast
> His narrow head with scanty growth of hair."

His talent lies in speaking evil of dignities—a talent which, no doubt, he had found popular enough in some circles of camp society, though all the respectable Greeks, we are assured, are shocked at him. He launches out now with bitter virulence — in which there is nevertheless (as in most oratory of the kind) a certain amount of truth—against Agamemnon. He denounces his greed, his selfishness, his disregard of the sufferings of his troops, his late treatment of Achilles; they must all be cowards, he says, to obey such a leader—

> "Women of Greece! I will not call ye men!"

Why not sail home at once, and leave him, if he can, to take Troy with his own single hand?

The mutineer speaks in an evil hour for himself, this time; for Ulysses hears him. That energetic chief answers him in terms as strong as his own, and warns him that if he should catch him again railing in like fashion—"taking the name of kings in his abusive mouth"—he will strip his garments from him, and flog him naked back to the ships. And, as an earnest of his promise, he lays the mighty sceptre heavily on his back and shoulders. Such prompt and vigorous chastisement meets the popular humour at once; and as

the hunchback writhes and howls under the blows, the fickle feelings of the Greeks break forth in peals of laughter. "Of the many good things Ulysses has done, this last," they swear, "is the best of all."

Then, prompted still by the goddess of Wisdom, Ulysses harangues the reassembled troops. He reminds them of their plighted oath of service to Agamemnon, of the encouraging oracles of heaven, of the disgrace of returning home from an unaccomplished errand. With the art of a true orator, he sympathises with their late feelings—it *is* bitter for them all, indeed, to waste so many years on a foreign shore, far from home, and wife, and children; but bitterest of all would it be

> "Long to remain, and bootless to return."

The venerable Nestor speaks to the same effect; and Agamemnon himself closes the debate with a call to immediate battle. It is a right royal speech, far more worthy of a true "king of men" than his former philippics—moderate in his allusion to Achilles, spirited in his appeal to his warriors.

> "Come but new friendship, and our feud destroy,
> Then from the evil that is fixed and sealed
> Not one day's respite shall be left to Troy—
> But now to dinner, ere we take the field;
> Let each his spear whet, and prepare his shield,
> Feed well the horses, and each chariot test,
> That we may fight it out till one side yield,
> Fight in sound harness, and not think of rest,
> Till the black night decide it as to Zeus seems best.
>
> "Then shall the horses in their foam be wet,
> While forward in the glittering car they strain;
> Then shall the straps of the broad buckler sweat
> Round many a breast there battling in the plain;
> Then shall the arm droop, hurling spears with pain:

And whomsoever I behold at lair
Here by the ships, and for the fight not fain,
Small for that skulker is the hope, I swear,
But that the dogs he fatten and the fowls of air." (W.)

He remembers, too, like a wise general, that a battle may be lost by fighting on an empty stomach. So the oxen and the fatlings are slain, the choice pieces of the thighs and the fat are offered in sacrifice to the gods, and then the whole army feasts their fill. Agamemnon holds a select banquet of six of the chief leaders—King Idomeneus of Crete, Nestor, Ajax the Greater and the Less, and Ulysses, "wise in council as Zeus." One guest comes uninvited—his brother Menelaus. He is no dinner-loving intruder; he comes, as the poet simply tells us, "because he knew in his heart how many were his brother's cares and anxieties,"—he might be of some use or support to him. Throughout the whole of the poem, the mutual affection borne by these two brothers is very remarkable, and unlike any type of the same relationship which exists in fiction. It is never put forward or specially dwelt upon, but comes out simply and naturally in every particular of their intercourse.

A king and priest, like Abraham at Bethel, Agamemnon stands by his burnt-offering, and lifts his prayer for victory to Jupiter, "most glorious and most great, who dwells in the clouds and thick darkness." But no favourable omen comes from heaven. The god, whether or no he accepts the offering, gives no sign. Nevertheless—we may suppose with a certain wilfulness which is part of his character—Agamemnon proceeds to set the battle in array; and the second book of the Iliad closes with the long muster-roll of the Greek

clans under their respective kings or chiefs on the one side, and of the Trojans and their allies on the other, which in our introduction has already been partly anticipated.* The long list of chiefs, with their genealogies and birthplaces, and the strength of their several contingents, was evidently composed with a view to recitation: and whatever may be its value as an authentic record, we can understand the interest with which a Greek audience would listen to a muster-roll which was to them what the Roll of Battle Abbey was to the descendants of the Normans in England. If here and there, upon occasion, the wandering minstrel inserted in the text the name and lineage of some provincial hero on his own responsibility, the popular applause would assuredly be none the less.

* Page 17.

# CHAPTER II.

## THE DUEL OF PARIS AND MENELAUS.

THE battle is set in array, "army against army." But there is a difference in the bearing of the opposed forces which is very significant, and is probably a note of real character, not a mere stroke of the poet's art. The Trojan host, after the fashion of Asiatic warfare, modern as well as ancient, move forward to the combat with loud shouts and clashing of weapons. The poet compares their confused clamour to the noise of a flock of cranes on their annual migration. The Greeks, on the other hand, march in silence, with closed ranks, uttering no sound, but "breathing determination." So, when afterwards they actually close for action, not a sound is heard in their ranks but the voice of the leaders giving the word of command. "You would not think," says the poet, "that all that mighty host had tongues;" while, in the mixed battalions of the enemy, whose allies are men of many lands and languages, there arises a noisy discordant clamour—"like as of bleating ewes that hear the cries of their lambs."

But while the hostile forces yet await the signal for the battle, Paris springs forth alone from the Trojan ranks. "Godlike" he is in his beauty, and with the

love of personal adornment which befits his character, he wears a spotted leopard's hide upon his shoulders. Tennyson's portrait of him, though in a different scene, is thoroughly Homeric—

> "White-breasted like a star,
> Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard's skin
> Drooped from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
> Clustered about his temples like a god's."

Advancing with long strides in the space between the armies, he challenges the leaders of the Greeks, one and all, to meet him singly in mortal combat. Menelaus hears the boast. "Like a hungry lion springing on his prey," he leaps full-armed from his chariot, exulting in the thought that now at last his personal vengeance shall be gratified. But conscience makes a coward of Paris. He starts back—"as a man that sees a serpent in his path"—the godlike visage grows pale, the knees tremble, and the Trojan champion draws back under the shelter of his friends from the gallant hero whom he has so bitterly wronged. The Roman historian Livy—a poet in prose—had surely this passage in his mind when he described Sextus Tarquinius, the dishonourer of Lucretia, quailing, as no Roman of his blood and rank would otherwise have quailed, when young Valerius dashes out from the Roman lines to engage him. The moral teaching of the heathen poet on such points is far higher than that of the medieval romancers with whom he has so many points in common. Sir Tristram of Lyonnois has no such scruples of conscience in meeting King Mark. Lancelot, indeed, will not fight with Arthur; but the very nobility of character with which the unknown author of that striking impersonation has endowed him is in itself the highest

of all wrongs against morality, in that it steals the reader's sympathies for the wrong-doer instead of for the injured husband. Shakespeare, as is his wont, strikes the higher key. It is the consciousness of guilt which makes Macbeth half quail before Macduff—

> "Of all men else have I avoided thee :
> But get thee back—my soul is too much charged
> With blood of thine already.
> . . . I will not fight with thee."

Paris withdraws into the Trojan ranks, and there encounters Hector. As has been already said, the poet assumes at the outset, on the part of his audience, at least such knowledge of his *dramatis personæ* as to make a formal introduction unnecessary. Hector is the noblest of all the sons of Priam, the shield and bulwark of his countrymen throughout the long years of the war. Achilles is the hero of the Iliad, and to him Homer assigns the palm of strength and valour; but, as is not seldom the case in fiction, the author has painted the rival hero so well that our sympathies are at least as frequently found on his side. We almost share Juno's feelings against the Trojans when they are represented by Paris; but when Hector comes into the field, our hearts half go over to the enemy. His character will be touched upon more fully hereafter: for the present, it must discover itself in the course of the story. He throws himself in the way of Paris in his cowardly retreat; and in spite of the fraternal feeling which is so remarkably strong amongst Homer's heroes,—in Hector and his brothers almost as much as in Agamemnon and Menelaus,—shame and disgust at his present poltroonery now mingle themselves with a

righteous hatred of the selfish lust which has plunged his country into a bloody war—

> "Was it for this, or with such heart as now,
> O'er the wide billows with a chosen band
> Thou sailedst, and with violated vow
> Didst bring thy fair wife from the Apian strand,
> Torn from the house of men of warlike hand,
> And a great sorrow for thy father's head,
> Troy town, and all the people of the land,
> By thine inhospitable offence hast bred,
> Thus for the enemy's sport, thine own confusion dread?
>
> "Lo, now thou cowerest, and wilt not abide
> Fierce Menelaus—thou hadst known, I ween,
> Soon of what man thou hast the blooming bride!
> Poor had the profit of thy harp then been,
> Vain Aphrodite's gifts, thy hair, thy mien,
> He mangling in the dust thy fallen brow.
> But there is no wrong to the Trojans keen,
> And they are lambs in spirit; or else hadst thou
> Worn, for thine evil works, a cloke of stone ere now." W.

Paris has the grace to admit the justice of his brother's rebuke. Hector, he confesses, is far the better soldier; only he pleads, with a self-complacency which he never loses, that grace of person, and a smooth tongue, and a taste for music, are nothing less than the gifts of the gods—that, in fact, it is not his fault that he is so irresistible. He ends, however, with an offer which is far more to Hector's mind. Let open lists be pitched in sight of both armies, and he will engage Menelaus in single combat; Helen and her wealth shall be the prize of victory.

It is a proposal at which Hector's heart rejoices. He checks at once the advancing line of the Trojans, and steps out himself to the front. The Greeks bend their bows at him, but Agamemnon understands his motions, and bids them hold their hands. It is a fair

challenge which the Trojan prince comes to make on behalf of Paris. Menelaus accepts it, in a few plain and gallant words—he is no orator :—

> "Hear now my answer; in this quarrel I
> May claim the chiefest share; and now I hope
> Trojans and Greeks may see the final close
> Of all the labours ye so long have borne,
> T' avenge my wrong at Paris' hand sustained.
> And of us two whiche'er is doomed to death,
> So let him die! the rest depart in peace." (D.)

A truce is agreed upon, to abide the result of this appeal of battle. A messenger from Olympus—Iris, goddess of the Rainbow—comes to warn Helen of the impending duel. And this introduces one of the most beautiful passages in the whole Iliad, to modern taste. Its sentiment and pathos are perfectly level and quiet; but as a natural and life-like yet highly-wrought portrait of a scene in what we may call the social drama, it stands almost without equal or parallel in classical literature.

Helen—the fatal cause of the war, the object of such violent passions and such bitter taunts—is sitting pensively in the palace of her royal father-in-law, writing her own miserable story. She is writing it—not in a three-volumed novel, as a lady who had a private history, more or less creditable, would write it now, but—in a golden tapestry, in which more laborious form it was in those days not unfrequent to write sensational biographies. Iris urges her to be present at the show. The whole reads like the tale of some medieval tournament, except that Helen herself is the prize of victory as well as the Queen of Beauty. Attended by her maidens, she goes down to the place where the aged Priam, like the kings of the Old Testa-

ment history, "sits in the gate" surrounded by the elders of his city. It is the "Scæan," or "left-hand" gate, which opens towards the camp of the enemy, and commands a view of their lines. We have had no word as yet of the marvellous beauty of Helen. There is no attempt to describe it throughout the whole of the poem. But here, in a few masterly touches, introduced in the simplest and most natural manner, Homer does more than describe it, when he tells us its effects. The old men break off their talk as the beautiful stranger draws near. They had seen her often enough before; the fatal face and form must have been well known in the streets and palaces of Troy, however retired a life Helen might well have thought it becoming in her unhappy position to lead. But the fair vision comes upon their eyes with a new and ever-increasing enchantment. They say each to the other as they look upon her, "It is no blame to Greeks or Trojans to fight for such a woman—she is worth all the ten years of war; still, let her embark and go home, lest we and our children suffer more for her." Even the earliest critics, when the finer shades of criticism were little understood, were forcibly struck with the art of the poet in selecting his witnesses for the defence. The Roman Quintilian had said nearly all that modern taste has since confirmed. He bids the reader mark who gives this testimony to Helen's charms. Not the infatuated Paris, who has set his own honour and his country's welfare at nought for the sake of an unlawful passion; not some young Trojan, who might naturally be ready to vow "the world well lost" for such a woman; nor yet any of the vulgar crowd, easily impressed, and always extravagant in its praise or blame; but these

grave and reverend seniors, men of cold passions and calm judgment, fathers whose sons were fighting and falling for this woman's sake, and even Priam himself, whose very crown and kingdom she had brought in deadly peril. He receives her, as she draws near, with gentle courtesy. Plainly, in his estimation, her unhappy position does not involve necessarily shame or disgrace. This opens one of the difficult questions of the moral doctrine of the Iliad, which can only be understood by bearing in mind the supernatural machinery of the poem. To the modern reader, the character of Helen, and the light in which she is regarded alike by Greeks and Trojans, present an anomaly in morals which is highly unsatisfactory. It is not as if Homer, like the worst writers of the Italian school, set marriage vows at nought, and made a jest of unchastity. Far otherwise; the heathen bard on such points took an infinitely higher tone than many so-called Christian poets. The difficulty lies in the fact that throughout the poem, while the crime is reprobated, the criminal meets with forbearance, and even sympathy. Our first natural impulse with regard to Helen is to look upon her much in the light in which she herself, in one of her bitter confessions, says she is looked upon by the mass of the Trojans:—

> "Throughout wide Troy I see no friendly eye,
> And Trojans shudder as I pass them by."

But this feeling, we must remember, arose much more from her being the cause of all the miseries of the siege, than from her having left her Greek husband. Priam and Hector—who have certainly not a lower morality, and a higher nobility and unselfishness, than

the mass of their countrymen—show no such feeling against her; on the contrary, they treat her with scrupulous delicacy and consideration. So also the leaders of the Greek forces betray no consciousness that they are fighting, after all, for a worthless woman; rather, she is a prize to be reclaimed, and Menelaus himself is ready from the first to receive her back again. How is this? Some have understood the poet to represent her abduction from her home to have been forcible—that she was carried off by Paris entirely against her will; but even allowing this (which is not consistent with many passages in the poem), it would not excuse or palliate her voluntary acceptance of such a degraded position throughout the subsequent story. The real explanation is given in a few words by Priam in the scene before us.

"Not thee I blame,
But to the gods I owe this woful war."

In Homer's sight, as in Priam's, she is the victim of Venus. She is "the victim of passion," only in a more literal and personal sense than we use the expression. Love, lawful or unlawful, was a divine—that is, a supernatural—force, to the mind of the poet. The spells of Venus are irresistible: that fatal gift of beauty is the right by which the goddess takes possession of her, and leads her captive at her evil will. Helen herself feels her own degradation far more deeply, in fact, than any one else seems to feel it; no one uses any expressions about her half so bitter as those which she applies to herself; "shameless," "bringer of sorrow," "whose name shall be a by-word and a reproach," are the terms she uses—

"Oh that the day my mother gave me birth,
Some storm had on the mountains cast me forth!"

We must judge Homer's characters with reference to the light of his religious creed—if creed it were—or at least with reference to the supernatural element employed in the Iliad. We shall be safe, then, in seeing Helen through Homer's eyes. We separate her unconsciously, as he does, from her fault. Look upon that as the poet does, as she does herself, as Priam and Hector and Menelaus do, as her fate, her misfortune, the weird that she has been doomed to dree,—and then, what a graceful womanly character remains! Gentle and daughterlike to the aged Priam, humble and tearful in the presence of her noble and generous brother-in-law Hector, as disdainful as she dares to be to her ignoble lord and lover,—tender, respectful, regretful, towards the gallant husband she has deserted.

So she comes in all her grace and beauty, and takes her seat by the old King's side upon the watch-tower, looking out upon the camp of the Greeks. He bids her tell him the names of such of the kings and chiefs as she can recognise. One there is who seems indeed a "king of men," by the grace of nature. There are taller warriors in the host; but none of such majestic mien and right royal bearing. It is, indeed, Agamemnon the son of Atreus, as Helen informs him,—

"Wide-reigning, mighty monarch, ruler good,
And valiant warrior; in my husband's name,
Lost as I am, I called him brother once."

Another chief attracts Priam's attention, as he strides along in front of the lines. Less in stature than Agamemnon, he is broader in the chest and shoulders. Helen knows him well. It is Ulysses, son of Laertes,

"the man of many wiles;" nursed among the rugged cliffs of his island kingdom of Ithaca, but already a traveller well versed in the ways of men, the stratagems of war, and the counsels of princes. He is recognised, too, now that Helen names him, by some of the Trojan elders; for he, it must be remembered (and Homer assumes that we know it), had accompanied Menelaus in the embassy to demand Helen's restitution. Old Antenor, now sitting by Priam's side, well remembers the remarkable stranger, whom he had lodged and entertained as a public guest. The picture he draws of him is one of the most graphic and individual of all Homer's characters.

"For hither when on thine account to treat,
Brave Menelaus and Ulysses came,
I lodged them in my house, and loved them both,
And studied well the form and mind of each.
As they with Trojans mixed in social guise,
When both were standing, o'er his comrade high
With broad-set shoulders Menelaus stood:
Seated, Ulysses was the nobler form:
Then, in the great assembly, when to all
Their public speech and argument they framed,
In fluent language Menelaus spoke,
In words though few, yet clear; though young in years,
No wordy babbler, wasteful of his speech:
But when the skilled Ulysses rose to speak,
With downcast visage would he stand, his eyes
Bent on the ground; the staff he bore, nor back
He waved, nor forward, but like one untaught,
He held it motionless; who only saw,
Would say that he was mad, or void of sense:
But when his chest its deep-toned voice sent forth,
With words that fell like flakes of wintry snow,
No mortal with Ulysses could compare;
Then, little recked we of his outward show." (D.)

A third hero catches the eye of the Trojan king, as

well he may—a leader like Saul, "taller by the head and shoulders than the rest of the people"—and he asks Helen to name him also. This is Ajax of Crete, son of Telamon, a giant chieftain, "the bulwark of the Greeks," represented here in the Iliad as easy-tempered and somewhat heavy, as it is the wont of giants to be, degraded by medieval and modern poets into a mere bulk without brains. "Mars' idiot," Shakespeare calls him, "who has not so much wit as would stop the eye of Helen's needle." Shirley, in his 'Ajax and Ulysses,' carries out the same popular notion :—

> "And now I look on Ajax Telamon,
> I may compare him to some spacious building;
> His body holds vast rooms of entertainment,
> And lower parts maintain the offices;
> Only the garret, his exalted head,
> Useless for wise receipt, is filled with lumber."

By the side of Ajax Helen also marks King Idomeneus of Crete, a frequent guest in the palace of Menelaus in happier times; for the court of Sparta, as will be seen hereafter in the Odyssey, was in these heroic days a centre of civilisation and refinement. Two chiefs Helen's anxious eyes vainly try to discern amongst the crowd of her countrymen,—

> "My own two brethren, and my mother's sons,
> Castor and Pollux; Castor, horseman bold,
> Pollux, unmatched in pugilistic skill;
> In Lacedæmon have they stayed behind?
> Or can it be, in ocean-going ships
> That they have come indeed, but shame to join
> The fight of warriors, fearful of the shame
> And deep disgrace that on my name attend?" (D.)

Helen's self-reproachful surmises have not reached the truth. The "Great Twin Brethren," who had once

already (so the ancient legend said) rescued their beautiful sister in her girlhood from the hands of Theseus, who had been amongst the mighty hunters of the Calydonian boar, and had formed part of the adventurous crew of the Argo, had finished their mortal warfare years before in a raid in Messenia; but to reappear as demigods in Greek and Roman legend,—the spirit horsemen who rallied the Roman line in the great fight with the Latins at the Lake Regillus, the "shining stars" who lighted the sailors on the stormy Adriatic, and gave their names to the ship in which St Paul was cast away.

"Back comes the chief in triumph,
Who, in the hour of fight,
Hath seen the Great Twin Brethren
In harness on his right.
Safe comes the ship to harbour,
Through billows and through gales,
If once the Great Twin Brethren
Sit shining on the sails." *

This picturesque dialogue between Priam and his fascinating guest is interrupted far too soon for the reader's complete enjoyment—somewhat too abruptly, indeed, for its perfection. One would like to have heard Helen's estimate of the other leaders of the Greeks; of Diomed, of the lesser Ajax, of Nestor, of Mnestheus the Athenian; and it is hardly possible not to fancy that the scene has been left by the poet incomplete, or that some portion has been lost past recovery. The tragedian Æschylus, who was full of the true Homeric spirit, carried out the idea to what seems its natural completion in a remarkable scene of 'The Seven Chiefs against Thebes,' to which we may

* Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome.

hope to introduce our readers more fully hereafter. Euripides, in his 'Phœnissæ,' adopts the very same machinery; and Tasso has also imitated the scene in his 'Jerusalem Delivered,'* where he brings Erminia on the walls, pointing out to King Aladine the persons of the most renowned of the besieging knights.

The interruption is as little satisfactory to Priam as to the reader. A herald summons the king of Troy to a conference in the mid-space between the city walls and the enemy's leaguer, in order to ratify the armistice, while Paris and Menelaus decide their quarrel in single combat. The old man mounts his chariot, "shuddering," as foreboding the defeat and death of his son. Agamemnon and Ulysses on the one side, Priam and Antenor on the other, duly slay the sacrificial lambs, and make joint appeal to Jupiter, the Avenger of oaths, pouring the red wine upon the earth with solemn imprecation, that so may flow forth the heart's blood of him who on either part shall break the truce. And the god listens as before, but does not accept the appeal. Priam withdraws, for he cannot bear to be a spectator of his son's peril. Hector and Ulysses, precisely in the fashion of the marshals in the tournaments of chivalry, measure out the lists; the rest of the Greeks lie down on the ground beside their horses and chariots, while the lots are cast which shall first throw the spear. The chance falls to Paris. He throws, and strikes full and fair in the centre of Menelaus' round shield. But the seasoned bull's hide turns the point, and it does not penetrate. Next comes the turn of Menelaus. Paris has ventured no appeal to heaven; but the Greek king lifts his voice in prayer to Jupiter for vengeance on

* Book iii. st. 12.

the traitor who has so abused his hospitality, before he poises his long lance carefully and hurls it at his enemy. Right through shield, breastplate, and linen vest goes the good Greek weapon; but Paris leans back to avoid it, and it only grazes him. Menelaus rushes forward, sword in hand, and smites a downright blow on Paris' crest. But the Trojan helmet proves of better quality than the shield, and the Greek blade flies in shivers. Maddened by his double failure, he rushes on his enemy, and seizing him by the horse-hair crest, drags him off by main strength towards the ranks of the Greeks. But in this extremity the goddess of love comes to the rescue of her favourite. At her touch the tough bullhide strap of Paris' head-piece, which was all but choking him, breaks, and leaves the empty helmet in the hands of Menelaus. He hurls it amongst his comrades in disappointment and disgust, and rushes once more in pursuit of Paris. But Venus has wrapt him in a mist, and carried him off; and while the son of Atreus rushes like a baffled lion up and down the lists in quest of him, while even the Trojans are aiding in the search, and no man among them would have hidden him—for "they all hated him like black death"—he is safely laid by the goddess in Helen's chamber. The scene in which she receives him is, like all the rest of her story, a beautiful contradiction. Her first greeting is bitter enough. Either her heart has been indeed with Menelaus in the fight—or at least she would have had her present husband come back from the field, dead or alive, in some more honourable fashion—

> "Back from the battle? Would thou there hadst died
> Beneath a warrior's arm whom once I called

My husband! Vainly didst thou boast erewhile
Thine arm, thy dauntless courage, and thy spear,
The warlike Menelaus should subdue!
Go now again, and challenge to the fight
The warlike Menelaus.—Be thou ware!
I warn thee, pause, ere madly thou presume
With fair-haired Menelaus to contend!" (D.)

Brave words! but still, as of old, the fatal spells of Venus are upon her, and Paris' misadventure in the lists is all too soon condoned.

# CHAPTER III.

## THE BROKEN TRUCE.

THE Greeks claim the victory—reasonably, since the Trojan champion has fled the lists; but again the intrigues of the court of Olympus interfere to interrupt the course of mortal justice. The gods of Homer are not the gods of Epicurus' creed, who, as our English poet sings, "lie beside their nectar, careless of mankind." They are anything but careless, so far as the affairs of mortals are concerned; but their interference is regulated by the most selfish motives. Men are the puppets whom they make to dance for their gratification—the counters with which they play their Olympian game, and try to defeat and checkmate each other. Even the respect which they pay to the mortal who is regular in the matter of offering sacrifices is entirely selfish—it seems to be merely the sensual appetite for fat roasts and rich savours. They are commonly influenced by jealousy, pique, revenge, or favouritism; and where they do punish the wrongdoer, it is far more often from a sense of *lèse-majesté*—a slight offered to some cause which is under their special protection—than from any moral indignation at wrong itself. When the scene opens in the fourth book of

the poem, it seems to pass at once from serious melodrama to broad comedy; and but that these dwellers in Olympus really rule the fortunes of the tale, it would be scarcely possible not to believe that the poet so intended it.

We are introduced again, then, to Olympus; and, as before, to a quarrel among the Immortals. It is Jove this time who is the aggressor. He has seen the result of the combat, and taunts Juno with the double patronage extended to the Greeks by herself and Minerva —which, after all, has failed—while Venus, more active and energetic, has rescued her favourite. However, he awards the victory to Menelaus; and suggests, as a solution to all disputes and difficulties, that now Helen should be given up, the Greeks go home, and so the fate of Troy be averted. At the thought of her enemy thus escaping, the queen of the gods cannot contain her rage. Jupiter gives way. He loves Troy much, but domestic peace and quietness more. He warns his queen, however, that if he now consents to give up Troy to her insatiable revenge, she shall not stand in his way hereafter, in case some community of mortals who may be her especial favourites shall incur his royal displeasure. And Juno, with that utter indifference to human suffering, or human justice, which characterises the deities of Olympus, makes answer in these words :—

> "Three cities there are dearest to my heart;
> Argos, and Sparta, and the ample streets
> Of rich Mycenæ; work on them thy will—
> Destroy them, if thine anger they incur—
> I will not interpose nor hinder thee."

In furtherance of this strange compact, Minerva is

once more sent down to the plains of Troy. Her mission now is to incite the Trojans to break the truce by some overt act, and thus not only renew the war, but put themselves plainly in the wrong. Clothing herself in the human shape of the son of old Antenor, she mingles in the Trojan ranks, and addresses herself to the cunning bowman Pandarus. His character in the Iliad has nothing in common with the "Sir Pandarus of Troy," whose name, as the base uncle of Cressida, has passed into an unwholesome by-word, and whom Lydgate, Chaucer, and, lastly, Shakespeare, borrowed from the medieval romancers. Here he is but an archer of known skill, somewhat given to display, with his bow of polished ibex-horns tipped with gold, and vain of his reputation, whom the goddess easily tempts to end the long war at once by a timely shot, and win immortal renown by taking off Menelaus. With a brief prayer and a vow of a hecatomb to Apollo, the god of the bow—who is supposed to be as ready as the rest of the immortals to abet an act of treachery on such conditions—Pandarus ensconces himself behind the shields of his comrades, and choosing out his arrow with the same care which we read of in the great exploits of more modern bowmen, he discharges it point-blank at the unsuspecting Menelaus. The shaft flies true enough, but Minerva is at hand to avert the actual peril from the Greek hero: she turns the arrow aside—

> "As when a mother from her infant's cheek,
> Wrapt in sweet slumbers, brushes off a fly."

It is a pretty simile; but the result is not so entirely harmless. The arrow strikes in the belt, and so meets

the double resistance of belt and corslet. It draws blood, nevertheless, in a stream; and both Menelaus and Agamemnon at first fear that the wound is mortal;—

> "Great Agamemnon shuddered as he saw
> The crimson blood-drops issuing from the wound,
> Shuddered the warlike Menelaus' self;
> But when the sinew and the arrow-head
> He saw projecting, back his spirit came.
> Then, deeply groaning, Agamemnon spoke,
> As Menelaus by the hand he held,
> And with him groaned his comrades; 'Brother dear,
> Fatal to thee hath been the oath I swore,
> When thou stoodst forth alone for Greece to fight;
> Wounded by Trojans, who their plighted troth
> Have trodden under foot.'" (D.)

Two points are remarkable in this passage: first, the tenderness which Agamemnon shows towards his younger brother, even to the point of self-reproach at having allowed him to fight Paris at all, though in a quarrel which was so thoroughly his own. His expressions of grief and remorse at the thought of going home to Greece without him (which run to considerable length), though somewhat tinged with selfishness, inasmuch as he feels his own honour at stake, are much more like the feeling of a parent than of an elder brother. Again, the picture of Menelaus "shuddering" at his own wound —so sensitive to the dread of death that he apparently all but faints, until he is reassured by finding that the barb of the arrow has not really penetrated—is utterly inconsistent with our English notions of a hero. We have to bear in mind, here and elsewhere, that these Greek heroes, of whatever race we are to suppose them to be, are of an entirely differ-

ent temperament to us cold and self-restrained northerns. They are highly sensitive to bodily pain, very much given to groans and tears, and very much afraid of death for themselves, however indifferent to human life in the case of others. Death, to these sensuous Greeks, was an object of dread and aversion, chiefly because it implied to their minds something like annihilation. However vivid in some passages of their poets is the description of those happy Elysian fields where the souls of heroes dwelt, the popular belief gave to the disembodied spirit but a shadowy and colourless existence.

The wound is soon stanched by the aid of the skilful leech Machaon, son of Æsculapius (and therefore grandson of Apollo "the Healer"), but who is a warrior and chieftain as well as the rest, though he has placed his skill at the service of Agamemnon. The King of Men himself, as soon as his brother's hurt is tended, rushes along the lines, rousing chiefs and clansmen to avenge the treachery of the enemy. Idomeneus of Crete, Ajax the Greater and the Less, Mnestheus of Athens, Ulysses, Diomed — to all in turn he makes his passionate appeal; to some, in language which they are inclined to resent, as implying that they were disinclined for the combat. Diomed and Sthenelus he even reminds of the brave deeds of their fathers Tydeus and Capaneus in the great siege of Thebes, and stings them with the taunt, that the sons will never win the like renown. Diomed hears in silence; but the son of Capaneus inherits, with all the bravery, something of the insolence of the chief who swore that "with or without the gods" he would burn Thebes: he answers the great king in words which have yet a certain nobility in their self-assertion—

" Atrides, lie not, when thou know'st the truth ;
We hold ourselves far better than our sires ;
We took the strength of seven-gated Thebes,
Though with a smaller host we stormed her towers,
Strong in heaven's omens and the help of Jove ;
For them—their own presumption was their fall."

All the leaders of the Greeks eagerly marshal their forces at the King's call. Nestor's experienced counsel orders the line of battle—so well, that subsequent commanders were fain to take a lesson from it.

" In the front rank, with chariot and with horse,
He placed the mounted warriors ; in the rear,
Num'rous and brave, a cloud of infantry,
Compactly massed, to stem the tide of war.
Between the two he placed th' inferior troops,
That e'en against their will they needs must fight.
The horsemen first he charged, and bade them keep
Their horses well in hand, nor wildly rush
Amid the tumult : 'See,' he said, 'that none,
In skill or valour over-confident,
Advance before his comrades, nor alone
Retire ; for so your lines were easier forced ;
But ranging each beside a hostile car,
Thrust with your spears ; for such the better way ;
By men so disciplined, in elder days,
Were lofty walls and fencèd towers destroyed.'" (D.)

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE FIRST DAY'S BATTLE.

As before, while the Greek line advances in perfect silence, the Trojans make their onset with loud shouts and a clamour of discordant war-cries in many tongues. Mars animates the Trojans, Minerva the Greeks; while Fear and Panic hover over the two armies, and Strife —whom the poet describes in words which are the very echo of Solomon's proverb—"The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water"—

> "With humble crest at first, anon her head,
> While yet she treads the earth, affronts the skies."

The two armies close in battle, only embittered by the broken truce. The description is a good specimen of the poet's powers, and Lord Derby's translation is sufficiently close :—

> "Then rose the mingled shouts and groans of men
> Slaying and slain ; the earth ran red with blood.
> As when descending from the mountain's brow
> Two wintry torrents from their copious source
> Pour downwards to the narrow pass, where meet
> Their mingled waters in some deep ravine,
> Their weight of flood, on the far mountain's side
> The shepherd hears the roar ; so loud arose
> The shouts and yells of those commingling hosts." *

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* There is a parallel, probably quite unconscious and there-

Then begins one of those remarkable descriptions of a series of single combats between warriors of note on either side, in which Homer delights and excels. It must be confessed that they are somewhat wearisome to a modern reader; although, as has been well observed, the details of attack and defence, wounds and death, are varied in a fashion which shows that the artist was thoroughly master of his work; and it is even said that in the physical results assigned to each particular wound he has shown no mean knowledge of anatomy. Still, the continuous catalogue of ghastly wounds and dying agonies is uncongenial with our more refined sympathies. But it was quite in harmony with the tastes of ruder days. We find the same apparent repetition of single combats in the medieval romances—notably in Mallory's King Arthur; and they were probably not the least popular portions of the tale. Even a stronger parallel case might be found in the description of a prize-fight in the columns of sporting newspapers, not so many years ago, when each particular blow and its results, up to "Round 102," were graphically described in language quite as figurative, if not so poetic, as Homer's; and found, we must suppose, a sufficient circle of readers to whom it was not only intelligible but highly interesting. The poet who recites—as we must suppose Homer to have done—must above every-

fore a higher testimony to the truth of Homer's simile, in Kinglake's vivid description of the charge of Scarlett's brigade on the Russian cavalry at Balaclava: "As heard on the edge of the Chersonese, a mile and a half towards the west, the collected roar which arose from this thicket of intermixed combatants had the unity of sound which belongs to the moan of a distant sea."—Kinglake's Crimea, iv. 174.

thing else excite and interest his audience: his lay must be rich in incident; and to an audience who were all more or less warlike, no incidents could be so exciting as the details of battle. There is much savageness in Homer's combats; but savageness is to the taste of men whose only means of excitement is through their grosser senses, and a love of the horrible in fact or fiction is by no means extinct even in our own day.

Young Antilochus, the son of Nestor's old age, draws the first blood in the battle. He kills Echepolus.

> "Beneath his horsehair-plumèd helmet's peak
> The sharp spear struck; deep in his forehead fixed,
> It pierced the bone: then darkness veiled his eyes,
> And, like a tower, amid the press he fell."

Over his dead body the combat grows furious—the Greeks endeavouring to drag him off to strip his armour, the Trojans to prevent it. The armour of a vanquished enemy was, in these combats, something like what an enemy's scalp is to the Indian "brave;" to carry it off in triumph, and hang it up in their own tents as a trophy, was the great ambition of the slayer and his friends. Ajax, too, slays his man—spearing him right through from breast to shoulder: and the tall Trojan falls like a poplar—

> "Which with his biting axe the wheelwright fells."

Ulysses, roused by the death of a friend who is killed in trying to carry off this last body, rushes to the front, and poising his spear, looks round to choose his victim. The foremost of his enemies recoil; but he drives his weapon right through the temples of Demophoon, a natural son of Priam, as he sits high in his chariot. The Trojans waver; even Hector gives ground; the Greeks cheer, and some carry off the bodies, while the

rest press forward. It is going hard with Troy, when Apollo, who sits watching the battle from the citadel, calls loudly to their troops to remember that "there is no Achilles in the field to-day." So the fight is renewed, Minerva cheering on the Greeks, as Apollo does the Trojans.

Diomed, the gallant son of Tydeus, now becomes the hero of the day. His exploits occupy, indeed, so large a portion of the next book of the poem, that it was known as "The Deeds of Diomed," and would form, according to one theory, a separate romance or lay of itself, exactly as some portions of the Arthurian romance have for their exclusive hero some one renowned Knight of the Round Table, as Tristram or Lancelot. Diomed fights under supernatural colours. Minerva herself not only inspires him with indomitable courage, but sheds over his whole person a halo of celestial radiance before which the bravest Trojan might well recoil—

> "Forth from his helm and shield a fiery light
> There flashed, like autumn's star, that brightest shines
> When newly risen from his ocean bath."

Once more the prince of archers, Pandarus the Lycian, comes to the rescue of the discomfited Trojans. He bends his bow against Diomed, who is now fighting on foot, and the arrow flies true to its mark. He sees it strike deep into the shoulder, and the red blood streams out visibly over the breastplate. Elated by his success, he turns round and shouts his triumphant rallying-cry to the Trojans—"The bravest of the Greeks is wounded to the death!" But his exultation is premature. Diomed gets him back to his chariot, and calls on his faithful friend and charioteer Sthenelus to draw the arrow from the wound. The blood wells out fast, as

the barb is withdrawn ; but the hero puts up a brief prayer to his guardian goddess for strength yet to avenge him of his adversary, whose exulting boast he has just heard. Minerva hears. By some rapid celestial pharmacy she heals the wound at once, and gives him fresh strength and vigour, adding these words of encouragement and warning :—

"Go fearless onward, Diomed, to meet
The Trojan hosts ; for I within thy breast
Thy father's dauntless courage have infused,
Such as of old in Tydeus' bosom dwelt,
Bold horseman, buckler-clad ; and from thine eyes
The film that dimmed them I have purged away,*
That thou mayest well 'twixt gods and men discern.
If then some god make trial of thy force,
With other of the Immortals fight thou not ;
But should Jove's daughter Venus dare the fray,
Thou need'st not shun at her to cast thy spear." (D.)

With redoubled vigour and fury the hero returns to the battle ; and again the Trojans' names, to each of which the poet contrives to give some touch of individual character, swell the list of his victims. Æneas marks his terrible career, and goes to seek for Pandarus. He points out to him the movements of the Greek champion, and bids him try upon his person the far-famed skill that had so nearly turned the fate of war in the case of Menelaus. Pandarus tells him of his late unsuccessful attempt, and declares his full belief

* The idea is borrowed by Milton in a well-known passage ;—

"To nobler sights
Michael from Adam's eyes the film removed
Which that false fruit, which promised clearer sight,
Had bred ; then purged with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see."
—Par. Lost, xi. 411.

that some glamour of more than mortal power has made Diomed invulnerable to human weapons. He bitterly regrets, as he tells Æneas, that he did not follow the counsels of his father Lycaon, and bring with him to the campaign, like other chiefs of his rank, some of those noble steeds of whom eleven pair stand always in his father's stalls, "champing the white barley and the spelt." He had feared, in truth, that they might lack provender in the straits of the siege:—

"Woe worth the day, when from the glittering wall,
Hector to serve, I took my shafts and bow,
And to fair Ilion, from my father's hall,
Captain of men, did with my Lycians go!
If ever I return, if ever I know
My country, my dear wife, my home again,
Let me fall headless to an enemy's blow,
Save the red blaze of fire these arms contain!" (W.)

Æneas bids him mount with him into his chariot, and together they will encounter this redoubtable Greek. Pandarus takes the spear and shield, while Æneas guides the horses. Diomed is still fighting on foot, when Sthenelus, who attends him with the chariot, sees the two hostile chiefs bearing down upon him. He begs his comrade to remount, and avoid the encounter with two such adversaries. Diomed indignantly refuses. He will slay both, with the help of Heaven; and he charges Sthenelus, if such should be the happy result, to leave his own horses and chariot, securing the reins carefully to the chariot-front, and make prize of the far-famed steeds of Æneas—they are descended from the immortal breed bestowed of old by Jupiter upon King Tros. So, on foot still, he awaits their onset. Pandarus stands high in the chariot

with poised weapon, and hails his enemy as he comes within hurling distance :—

> "Prince, thou art met! though late in vain assailed,
> The spear may enter where the arrow failed."

It does enter, and piercing through the tough ox-hide of the shield, stands fixed in the breastplate. Again, with premature triumph, he shouts exultingly to Diomed that at last he has got his death-wound. But the Greek quietly tells him that he has missed—which assuredly he himself is not going to do. He hurls his spear in turn with fatal aim: and the poet tells us with ghastly detail how it entered beneath the eyeball, and passed down through the "white teeth" and tongue—

> "Till the bright point looked out beneath the chin"—

and Pandarus the Lycian closes his career, free at least from the baseness which medieval romances have attached to his name.

Æneas, in obedience to the laws of heroic chivalry, at once leaps down from the chariot to defend against all comers the body of his fallen comrade.

> "And like a lion fearless in his strength
> Around the corpse he stalked this way and that,
> His spear and buckler round about him held,
> To all who dared approach him threat'ning death."

Diomed in this case avails himself of a mode of attack not uncommon with Homer's heroes. He seizes a huge stone—which not two men of this degenerate age (says Homer, with a poet's cynicism for the present) could have lifted—and hurls it at the Trojan prince. It strikes him on the hip, crushes the joint, and brings him to his knees. But that his goddess-mother Venus comes to his rescue, the world had heard the last of Æneas, and

Virgil must have sought another hero for his great poem.

> " About her much-loved son her arms she throws—
> Her arms, whose whiteness match the falling snows;
> Screened from the foe behind her shining veil,
> The swords wave harmless and the javelins fail." (P.)

Sthenelus, for his part, remembers the orders of his friend and chief, and drives off at once to the Greek camp with the much-coveted horses of Æneas. Diomed rushes in pursuit of Venus—whom he knows, by his new gift of clear vision—as she carries off her son through the ranks of the Trojans. She, at least, of all the divinities of Olympus, had no business, thought the Greek, in the *mêlée* of battle. Besides, he had received from Minerva special permission to attack her. Most ungallantly, to our notions, he does so. The scene is such a curious one, that it is well to give Lord Derby's version of it:—

> " Her, searching through the crowd, at length he found,
> And springing forward, with his pointed spear
> A wound inflicted on her tender hand.
> Piercing th' ambrosial veil, the Graces' work,
> The sharp spear grazed her palm below the wrist.
> Forth from the wound th' immortal current flowed,
> Pure ichor, life-stream of the blessed Gods;
> They eat no bread, they drink no ruddy wine,
> And bloodless thence and deathless they become.
> The goddess shrieked aloud, and dropped her son;
> But in his arms Apollo bore him off
> In a thick cloud enveloped, lest some Greek
> Might pierce his breast, and rob him of his life.
> Loud shouted brave Tydides, as she fled:
> 'Daughter of Jove, from battle-fields retire;
> Enough for thee weak women to delude;
> If war thou seek'st, the lesson thou shalt learn
> Shall cause thee shudder but to hear it named.'
> Thus he; but ill at ease, and sorely pained,

The Goddess fled: her, Iris, swift as wind,
Caught up, and from the tumult bore away,
Weeping with pain, her fair skin soiled with blood."

It is the original of the grand passage in the 'Paradise Lost,' in which the English poet has adopted almost literally the Homeric idea of suffering inflicted on an immortal essence, while carefully avoiding the ludicrous element in the scene. In the battle of the Angels, Michael cleaves Satan down the right side :—

"The griding sword with discontinuous wound
Passed through him; but th' ethereal substance closed,
Not long divisible; and from the gash
A stream of nectar'ous humour issuing flowed,
Sanguine, such as celestial spirits may bleed."
—Par. Lost, vi. 329.

In sore plight the goddess mounts to Olympus, and there, throwing herself into the arms of her mother Dione, bewails the wrong she has suffered at the hands of a presumptuous mortal. Dione comforts her as best she may, reminding her how in times past other of the Olympian deities have had to endure woes from men: Mars, when the giants Otus and Ephialtes bound him for thirteen months in brazen fetters; Juno herself, the queen of Heaven, and Pluto, the king of the Shades, had been wounded by the daring Hercules. She foretells, however, an untimely death for the presumptuous hero who has raised his hand against a goddess :—

"Fool and blind!
Unknowing he how short his term of life,
Who fights against the gods! for him no child
Upon his knees shall lisp a father's name,
Safe from the war and battle-field returned.
Brave as he is, let Diomed beware
He meet not with a mightier than himself:
Then fair Ægiale, Adrastus' child,
The noble wife of valiant Diomed,

Shall long, with lamentations loud, disturb
The slumbers of her house, and vainly mourn
Her youthful lord, the bravest of the Greeks." (D.)

But Dione is no prophet. Diomed returned home (if the later legends are to be believed) to find that his wife Ægiale had been anything but inconsolable during his absence.

Venus' wound is healed, and her tears are soon dried. But Minerva—whose province in the celestial government seems to be not only wisdom but satire—cannot resist a jest upon the unfortunate plight of the Queen of Love. She points her out to Jupiter, and suggests as a probable explanation of the wound, that she has been trying to lead astray some other fair Greek, like Helen,—

" And as her hand the gentle dame caressed,
A golden clasp has scratched her slender arm."

Jupiter smiles, and calling his pouting daughter-goddess to his side, recommends her in future to leave to Mars and Minerva the dangers of the battle-field, and confine her own prowess to campaigns in which she is likely to be more victorious.

Diomed is still rushing in pursuit of Æneas. He knows that Apollo is shielding him; but not even this knowledge checks the impetuous Greek.

" Thrice was his onset made, with murd'rous aim,
And thrice Apollo struck his glittering shield;
But when with godlike force he sought to make
His fourth attempt, the Far-destroyer spake
In terms of awful menace; 'Be advised,
Tydides, and retire; nor as a god
Thyself esteem, since not alike the race
Of gods immortal and of earth-born men.'" (D.)

Diomed accepts the warning, and Æneas is carried

off to the temple of Apollo in the citadel, where Latona and Diana tend and heal him. Apollo meanwhile replaces him in the battle by a phantom likeness, round which Greeks and Trojans continue the fight. Then he calls his brother deity the War-god to the rescue of the hard-prest Trojans, and entreats him to scare from the field this irreverent and outrageous champion, who, he verily believes, would lift his spear against Olympian Jove himself. In the likeness of a Thracian chief, Mars calls Hector to the rescue; and the Trojan prince leaps from his chariot, and, crying his battle-cry, turns the tide of war. Æneas is restored, sound and well, to his place in the *mêlée*—somewhat indeed to the astonishment of his friends, who had seen him lying so long grievously wounded; but, as the poet pithily remarks, little time had they to ask him questions. The two Ajaxes, Ulysses, Menelaus, and Agamemnon himself, "king of men," come to the forefront of the Greek battle: and the young Antilochus, son of the venerable Nestor, notably wins his spurs. But the Trojans have supernatural aid: and Diomed, of the purged vision, cries to his friends to beware, for that he sees the War-god in their front brandishing his huge spear. The Greek line warily gives ground before this immortal adversary. The Queen of Heaven can no longer endure to be a mere spectatress of the peril of her favourites. She obtains permission from Jupiter to send Minerva against Mars: and the two goddesses, seated in Juno's chariot of state, glide down from Olympus—

> "Midway between the earth and starry heaven"—

and alight upon the plain of Troy. There Juno, taking human shape, taunts the Greek troops with cowardice—

"In form of Stentor of the brazen voice,
Whose shout was as the shout of fifty men"—

and whose name has made a familiar place for itself in our English vocabulary.

"Shame on ye, Greeks, base cowards! brave alone
In outward semblance: while Achilles yet
Went forth to battle, from the Dardan gates
The Trojans never ventured to advance."

Minerva seeks out Diomed, whom she finds leaning on his chariot, resting awhile from the fight, and bathing the wound made by the arrow of Pandarus. She taunts him with his inferiority to his great father Tydeus, who was, she reminds him, "small in stature, but every inch a soldier." Diomed excuses himself by reference to her own charge to him—to fight with none of the immortals save Venus only. But now the goddess withdraws the prohibition, and herself—putting on the "helmet of darkness," to hide herself from Mars—takes her place beside him in the chariot, instead of Sthenelus, his henchman and charioteer; and the chariot-axle groans beneath the more than mortal load. They drive in full career against the War-god: in vain he hurls his spear against Diomed, for the hand of the goddess turns it safely aside. The mortal champion is more successful: his spear strikes Mars in the flank, piercing the flesh, and drawing from him, as from Venus, the heavenly "ichor." And the wounded god cries out with a shout like that of ten thousand men, so that both hosts listen to the sound with awe and trembling. He too, like Venus, flies to Olympus, and there makes piteous complaint of the impious deeds which, at the instigation of Minerva, this headstrong mortal is permitted to do. His father

Jupiter rates him soundly, as the outlaw of the Olympian family, inheriting his mother Juno's headstrong temper. However, he bids Pæon, the physician of the immortals, heal the wound, and Hebe prepares him a bath. Juno and Minerva have done their work, having driven Mars from the field, and they too quit the plains of Troy, and leave the mortal heroes to themselves.

While Diomed still pursues his career of slaughter, Menelaus gives token of that easy and pliant disposition which half explains his behaviour to Helen. He has at his mercy a Trojan who has been thrown from his chariot, and begs his life. The fair-haired king is about to spare him,—as none in the whole story of the fight is spared,—when his brother Agamemnon comes up, and after chiding him for such soft-heartedness, pins the wretched suppliant to the ground with his ashen spear.

So the fight goes on through the sixth book; which is, however, chiefly remarkable for two of the most striking episodes in the poem. The first is the meeting of Diomed with the young Lycian captain, Glaucus. Encountering him in the field, and struck by his bold bearing, he asks his name and race. Glaucus replies with that pathetic simile which, found under many forms in many poets, has its earliest embodiment in the verse of the Hebrew Psalmist and the Greek bard. "The days of man are but as grass."

"Brave son of Tydeus, wherefore set thy mind
My race to know? the generations are
As of the leaves, so also of mankind.
As the leaves fall, now withering in the wind,
And others are put forth, and spring descends,
Such on the earth the race of men we find;
Each in his order a set time attends;
One generation rises and another ends." (W.)

The young chieftain goes on, nevertheless, to announce his birth and lineage. He is the grandson of the noble Bellerophon—the rider of the wondrous horse Pegasus and the slayer of the monster Chimæra—all of whose exploits he narrates at length, with some disregard to probabilities, in the full roar of the battle round him. It turns out that he and Diomed are bound together by a tie which all of Greek blood scrupulously respected—the rights of hospitality exercised towards each other by some of their ancestors. Such obligations descended from father to son, and served from time to time to mitigate the fierce and vindictive spirit of an age when every man's hand was in some sort against another. The grandfather of Diomed had been Bellerophon's guest and friend. So the Greek places his spear in the ground, and vows that he will not raise his arm against Glaucus. There are enough besides of the Trojan allies for him to slay, and Glaucus may find Greeks enough on whom to flesh his valour; but for themselves, the old hereditary bond shall hold good, and in token of amity they will change armour. A good exchange, indeed, for Diomed; for whereas his own is but of the ordinary brass or bronze, the young Lycian's panoply is richly inlaid with gold—"a hundred oxen's worth for the worth of nine." The Greek words have passed into a proverb.

The Trojans are still hard prest, and by the advice of his brother Helenus, who has the gift of sooth-saying, and is as it were the domestic priest of the royal household, Hector hastens to the city, and directs his mother Hecuba to go with her matrons in solemn procession to the temple of Pallas, and beseech the goddess to withdraw the terrible Diomed from

the field. In the palace, to his indignation, he finds Paris dallying with Helen, and polishing his armour instead of joining the fight. Hector upbraids him sharply: and Helen, in a speech full of self-abasement, laments the unworthiness of her paramour. Hector speaks no word of reproach to her, though he gently declines her invitation to rest himself also a while from the battle. Paris promises to follow him at once to the field; and Hector moves on to his own wife's apartments, to see her and his child once more before he goes back to the combat which he has a half-foreboding will end fatally for himself, whatever be the fortunes of Troy.

And now we are introduced to the second female character in the poem, standing in the strongest possible contrast with that of Helen, but of no less admirable conception. It is remarkable how entirely Homer succeeds in interesting us in his women, without having recourse to what might seem to us the very natural expedient of dwelling on their personal charms; especially when it is taken into account that, in his simple narrative, he has not the resources of the modern novelist, who can make even the plainest heroine attractive by painting her mental perfections, or setting before us the charms of her conversation. It has been said that he rather assumes than describes the beauty of Helen: in the case of Andromache, it has been remarked that he never once applies to her any epithet implying personal attractions, though all his translators, Lord Derby included, have been tempted to do so. It is as the wife and mother that Andromache charms us. We readily assume that she is comely, graceful—all that a woman should be; but it is simple grace of

domestic character which forms the attraction of the Trojan princess.

Hector does not find her, as he expects, in the palace. She had heard how the fortunes of the day seemed turning against the Trojans; and she had hurried, "like one distraught," to the tower of the citadel, to see with her own eyes how the fight was going. He meets her at the Scæan gates, with the nurse and the child, "whom Hector called Scamandrius, from the river, but the citizens Astyanax"—"defender of the city." The father looks silently on his boy, and smiles; Andromache in tears clings to her husband, and makes a pathetic appeal to him not to be too prodigal of a life which is so dear to his wife and child. Her fate has been already that of many women of her day. Her father and seven tall brethren have been slain by the fierce Achilles, when ravaging the country round Troy he destroyed their native city of Cilician Thebes: her mother too is dead, and she is left alone. She adds the touching loving confession, which Pope's version has made popular enough even to unclassical ears—

> "But while my Hector still survives, I see
> My father, mother, brethren, all in thee."

Hector soothes her, but it is with a mournful foreboding of evil to come. He values too much his own honour and fair fame to shrink from the battle:—

> "I should blush
> To face the men and long-robed dames of Troy,
> If like a coward I could shun the fight;
> Nor could my soul the lessons of my youth
> So far forget, whose boast it still has been
> In the fore-front of battle to be found,
> Charged with my father's glory and mine own.
> Yet in my inmost soul too well I know
> The day must come when this our sacred Troy,

And Priam's race, and Priam's royal self,
Shall in one common ruin be o'erthrown." (D.)

But that which wrings his heart most of all is the vision before his eyes of his beloved wife dragged into slavery. Pope's version of the rest of the passage is so good of its kind, and has so naturalised the scene to our English conceptions, that no closer version will ever supersede it.

"Thus having spoke, th' illustrious chief of Troy
Stretched his fond arms to clasp the lovely boy;
The babe clung crying to his nurse's breast,
Scared at the dazzling helm and nodding crest.
With secret pleasure each fond parent smiled,
And Hector hasted to relieve his child,
The glitt'ring terrors from his brows unbound,
And placed the beaming helmet on the ground.
Then kissed the child, and lifting high in air,
Thus to the Gods preferred a father's prayer:
'O thou! whose glory fills th' ethereal throne,
And all ye deathless powers! protect my son!
Grant him, like me, to purchase just renown,
To guard the Trojans, to defend the crown,
Against his country's foes the war to wage,
And rise the Hector of the future age!
So when triumphant from successful toils,
Of heroes slain he bears the reeking spoils,
Whole hosts may hail him with deserved acclaim,
And say—This chief transcends his father's fame:
While pleased amidst the general shouts of Troy,
His mother's conscious heart o'erflows with joy.'
He spoke, and fondly gazing on her charms,
Restored the pleasing burthen to her arms;
Soft on her fragrant breast the babe she laid,
Hushed to repose, and with a smile surveyed.
The troubled pleasure soon chastised by fear,
She mingled with the smile a tender tear.
The softened chief with kind compassion viewed,
And dried the falling drops, and thus pursued."

The "charms," be it said, are entirely Pope's idea, and do not harmonise with the simplicity of the true

Homeric picture. The husband was not thinking of his wife's beauty. He "caresses her with his hand," and tries to cheer her with the thought that no hero dies until his work is done.

"For, till my day of destiny is come,
No man may take my life; and when it comes,
Nor brave nor coward can escape that day.
But go thou home, and ply thy household cares,
The loom and distaff, and appoint thy maids
Their several tasks; and leave to men of Troy,
And chief of all to me, the toils of war." (D.)

The tender yet half-contemptuous tone in which the iron soldier relegates the woman to her own inferior cares, is true to the spirit of every age in which war is the main business of man's life. Something in the same tone is the charming scene between Hotspur and his lady in Shakspeare's 'Henry IV.'

"*Hotspur.* Away, you trifler!—Love? I love thee not,—
I care not for thee, Kate; this is no world
To play with mammets and to tilt with lips:
We must have bloody noses and crack't crowns,
And pass them current too.—God's me, my horse!—
What say'st thou, Kate? What wouldst thou have with me?
*Lady Percy.* Do you not love me? Do you not indeed?
Well,—do not, then; for since you love me not,
I will not love myself.—Do you not love me?
Nay, tell me if you speak in jest, or no.
*Hotspur.* Come, wilt thou see me ride?
And when I am o' horseback, I will swear
I love thee infinitely. But hark you, Kate:
I must not have you henceforth question me
Whither I go, nor reason whereabout;
Whither I must, I must; and, to conclude,
This evening must I leave you, gentle Kate.
I know you wise; but yet, no further wise
Than Harry Percy's wife: constant you are—
But yet a woman: and for secrecy,
No lady closer: for I well believe
Thou wilt not utter that thou dost not know."

Hector and his wife part; he to the fight, accompanied now by Paris, girt for the battle in glittering armour, the show knight of the Trojans: Andromache back to the palace, casting many a lingering glance behind at the gallant husband she is fated never again to see alive. The Roman ladies of the last days of the Republic were not much given to sentiment; but we do not wonder that Brutus's wife, Portia, knowing well the Homeric story, was moved to tears in looking at a picture of this parting scene.

# CHAPTER V.

## THE SECOND DAY'S BATTLE.

By the advice of his brother Helenus, who knows the counsels of heaven, Hector now challenges the Greek host to match some one of their chieftains against him in single combat. There is an unwillingness even amongst the bravest to accept the defiance—so terrible is the name of Hector. Menelaus—always gallant and generous—is indignant at their cowardice, and offers himself as the champion. He feels he is no match for Hector; but, as he says with modest confidence, the issues in such case lie in the hands of heaven. But Agamemnon, ever affectionately careful of his brother, will not suffer such unequal risk: some more stalwart warrior shall be found to maintain the honour of the Achæans. Old Nestor rises, and loudly regrets that he has no longer the eye and sinews of his youth—but the men of Greece, he sees with shame, are not now what they were in his day. Stung by the taunt, nine chiefs spring to their feet at once, and offer themselves for the combat. Conspicuous amongst them are Diomed, the giant Ajax, and King Agamemnon himself; and when the choice of a champion is referred to lot, the hopes and wishes of the whole army

are audibly expressed, that on one of these three the lot may fall. It falls on Ajax; and amidst the congratulations and prayers of his comrades, the tall chieftain dons his armour, and strides forth to meet his adversary. The combat is maintained with vigour on both sides, till dusk comes on; the heralds interpose, and they separate with mutual courtesies and exchange of presents.

Both armies agree to a truce, that they may collect and burn their dead who strew the plain thickly after the long day's battle. The Trojans, dispirited by their loss, and conscious that, owing to the breach of the first truce by the treacherous act of Pandarus, they are fighting under the curse of perjury, hold a council of war, in which Antenor (the Nestor of Troy) proposes to restore Helen and her wealth, and so put an end at last to this weary siege. But Paris refuses—he will give back the treasure, but not Helen; and the proposal thus made is spurned by the Greeks as an insult. They busy themselves in building a fortification—ditch, and wall, and palisade—to protect their fleet from any sudden incursion of the Trojans. When this great work is completed, they devote the next night to one of those heavy feasts and deep carousals, to which men of the heroic mould have always had the repute of being addicted in the intervals of hard fighting. Most opportunely, a fleet of merchant-ships comes in from Lemnos, laden with wine; in part a present sent by Euneus, son of the renowned voyager Jason, to the two royal brothers; in part a trading speculation, which meets with immediate success among the thirsty host. The thunder of Olympus rolls all through the night, for the Thunderer is angry at the prolongation of the

war: but the Greeks content their consciences with pouring copious libations to appease his wrath, and after their prolonged revelry sink into careless slumber.

At daybreak Jupiter holds a council in Olympus, and harangues the assembled deities at some length—with a special request that he may not be interrupted. He forbids, on pain of his royal displeasure, any further interference on the part of the Olympians on either side in the contest; and then, mounting his chariot, descends in person to Mount Ida to survey the field of battle, once more crowded with fierce combatants. He hesitates, apparently, which side he shall aid—for he has no intention of observing for himself the neutrality which he has so strictly enjoined upon others. So he weighs in a balance the fates of Greek and Trojan: the former draws down the scale, while the destiny of Troy mounts to heaven. The metaphor is reversed, according to our modern notions; it is the losing side which should be found wanting when weighed in the balance. And so Milton has it in the passage which is undoubtedly founded on these lines of Homer. "The Omnipotent," says Milton,

> "Hung forth in heaven His golden scales, yet seen
> Betwixt Astræa and the Scorpion sign,
> Wherein all things created first He weighed,
> The pendulous round earth with balanced air
> In counterpoise; now ponders all events,
> Battles and realms; in these He put two weights,
> The sequel each of parting and of fight:
> The latter quick up flew and kicked the beam."

And Gabriel bids Satan look up, and mark the warning:—

> "'For proof look up,
> And read thy lot in yon celestial sign,
> Where thou art weighed, and shown how light, how weak,

If thou resist!' The Fiend looked up, and knew
His mounted scale aloft; nor more, but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night."
—Par. Lost, end of B. iv.

In accordance with this decision the Thunderer sends his lightnings down upon the host of the Greeks, and throws them into terror and confusion. Nestor, still in the thickest of the fray, has one of his chariot-horses killed by a shaft from the bow of Paris; and while he is thus all but helpless, Diomed sees the terrible Hector bearing down on the old chief in full career. He bids Nestor mount with him, and together they encounter the Trojan prince, against whom Diomed hurls his spear: he misses Hector, but kills his charioteer. As Diomed presses on, a thunderbolt from Jupiter ploughs the ground right in front of his startled horses. Nestor sees in this omen the wrath of heaven; and at his entreaty Diomed reluctantly allows him to turn the horses, and retires, pursued by the loud taunts of Hector, who bids the Greek "wench" go hide herself. Thrice he half turns to meet his jesting enemy, and thrice the roll of the angry thunder warns him not to dare the wrath of the god. Hector in triumph shouts to his comrades to drive the Greeks back to their new trenches, and burn their fleet. He calls to his horses by name (he drove a bright bay and a chestnut, and called them Whitefoot and Firefly), and bids them do him good suit and service now, if ever, in return for all the care they have had from Andromache, who has fed them day by day with her own hands, even before she would offer the wine-cup to their thirsty master. The Greeks are driven back into their trenches, where they are rallied by the royal

brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus in person. They have too on their side a bowman as good as Pandarus or Paris, who now does them gallant service. It is Teucer, the younger brother of the huge Ajax. The description of his manner of fight would suit almost exactly the light archer and his pavoise-bearer of the medieval battle :—

> " Ajax the shield extended : Teucer then
> Peered from behind, and with a shaft forth stept,
> And slew one singled from the enemy's men :
> Then, as a child creeps to his mother, crept
> To Ajax, who the shield before him swept." (W.)

Eight times he draws his bow, and every arrow reaches its mark in a Trojan. Twice he shoots at Hector, but each time the shaft is turned aside, and finds some less renowned victim. Of these the last is Hector's charioteer—the second who in this day's battle has paid the forfeit of that perilous honour. Hector leaps down to avenge his death, and Teucer, felled to the ground by a huge fragment of rock, is carried off the field with a broken shoulder, still covered by the shield of Ajax. The Greeks remain penned within their stockade, and nothing but the approach of night saves their fleet from destruction. The victorious Trojans bivouac on the field, their watch-fires lighting up the night ; for Hector's only fear now is lest his enemies should embark and set sail under cover of the darkness, and so escape the fate which he is confident awaits them on the morrow. Mr Tennyson has chosen for translation the fine passage describing the scene, which closes the Eighth Book :—

> " As when in heaven the stars about the moon
> Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
> And every height comes out, and jutting peak,
> And valley, and the immeasurable heavens

Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart :
So many a fire between the ships and stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
A thousand on the plain ; and close by each
Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;
And, champing golden grain, the horses stood
Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn."

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE EMBASSY TO ACHILLES.

THE opening of the Ninth Book shows us the Greeks utterly disheartened inside their intrenchments. The threat of the dishonoured Achilles is fast being accomplished: they cannot stand before Hector. Agamemnon calls a hasty council, and proposes—in sad earnest, this time—that all should re-embark and sail home to Greece. The proposal is received in silence by all except Diomed. He boldly taunts the king with cowardice: the other Greeks may go home if they will, but he and his good comrade Sthenelus will stay and fight it out, even if they fight alone. Then Nestor takes the privilege of his age to remind Agamemnon that his insult to Achilles is the real cause of their present distress. Let an embassy be sent to him where he lies beside his ships, in moody idleness, to offer him apology and compensation for the wrong. The king consents; and Ajax, Ulysses, and Phœnix are chosen to accompany the royal heralds on this mission of reconciliation. Ajax—the chief who in all warlike points stands second only to Achilles himself in the estimation of the army—is a delegate to whom even the great captain of the Myrmidons must surely listen with respect. Phœnix has been a sort of foster-father to Achilles

from his boyhood, intrusted with the care of him by his father Peleus, and has now accompanied him to the war by the old man's special request, to aid him with advice and counsel. If any one in the camp has any influence over the headstrong prince, it will be the man who, as he says, has dandled him in his arms in his helpless infancy. And no diplomatic enterprise could be complete without the addition of Ulysses, the man of many devices and of persuasive tongue. The chiefs set forth, and take their way along the shore to the camp of the Myrmidons. They find Achilles sitting in his tent, solacing his perturbed spirit with playing on the lyre, to the music of which he sings the deeds of heroes done in the days of old—the exact prototype of those knightly troubadours of later times, who combined the accomplishments of the minstrel with the prowess of the soldier. His faithful henchman Patroclus sits and listens to the song. With graceful and lofty courtesy the chief of the Myrmidons rises from his seat, and lays his lyre aside, and welcomes his visitors. He will hear no message until they have shared his hospitality. He brings them in, and sets them down on couches spread with purple tapestry. Then, with the grand patriarchal simplicity of the days of Abraham, when no office done for a guest was held to be servile, he bids Patroclus fill a larger bowl, and mix the wine strong, and make good preparation of the flesh of sheep, and goats, and well-fed swine. The great hero himself divides the carcases, while his charioteer Automedon holds them. The joints are cooked above the heaped embers on ample spits under the superintendence of Patroclus; and when all is ready, they fall to with that wholesome appetite which has

been the characteristic of most heroes in classical and medieval times, Achilles carving for his guests, while Patroclus deals out the bread. Professor Wilson's remarks on the scene are characteristic :—

"In nothing was the constitution of the heroes more enviable than its native power—of eating at all times, and without a moment's warning. Never does a meal to any distinguished individual come amiss. Their stomachs were as heroic as their hearts, their bowels magnanimous. It cannot have been forgotten by the reader, who hangs with a watering mouth over the description of this entertainment, that about two hours before these three heroes, Ulysses, Ajax, and old Phœnix, had made an almost enormous supper in the pavilion of Agamemnon. But their walk

'Along the margin of the sounding deep'

had reawakened their slumbering appetite."

In this respect, too, the heroes of the Carlovingian and Arthurian romances equal those of Homer—probably, indeed, taking their colour from his originals. Nay, a good capacity for food and drink seems in itself to have been considered an heroic quality. When Sir Gareth of Orkney sits him down at table, coming as a stranger to King Arthur's court, his performance as a trencher-man excites as much admiration as his soldier-like thews and sinews. The company declare of him enthusiastically that "they never saw so goodly a man, nor so well of his eating." And in the same spirit Sir Kay, Arthur's foster-brother, is said, in the Welsh legend, to "have drunk like four, and fought like a hundred." The animal virtues are closely linked together; we still prognosticate favourably of a horse's

powers of endurance if we see that he is, like Sir Gareth, a good feeder. And perhaps it is some lingering reminiscence of the old heroic ages that leads us still to mark our appreciation of modern heroes by bestowing on them a public dinner.

When the meal is over, Ulysses rises, and in accordance with immemorial custom—as old, it appears, as these half-mythical ages—pledges the health of their illustrious host. In a speech which does full justice to the oratorical powers which the poet assigns him, he lays before Achilles the proposal of Agamemnon. He sets forth the straits to which the Greeks are reduced, pent within their fortifications by the terrible Hector, and acknowledges, in the fullest manner, that in the great name of Achilles lies their only hope of rescue. He dwells upon the remorse which Achilles himself will surely feel, when too late, if he suffers the hopes of Greece to be ruined by the indulgence of his own haughty spirit—the temper against which, as he reminds him, his aged father warned him when first he set out for Troy :—

> "My son, the boon of strength, if so they will,
> Juno or Pallas have the power to give ;
> But thou thyself thy haughty spirit must curb,
> For better far is gentle courtesy."

He lays before him the propositions of Agamemnon. Briseis shall be restored to him, in all honour, pure as when she left him ; so the great point in the quarrel is fully conceded. Moreover, the king will give him the choice of his three daughters in marriage, if it ever be their happy fate to see again the shores of Argos, and will add such dowry

> "As never man before to daughter gave."

And he will send, for the present, peace-offerings of royal magnificence; ten talents of pure gold, seven fair Lesbian slaves, "well skilled in household cares," twelve horses of surpassing fleetness—the prizes they have already won would be in themselves a fortune—and seven prosperous towns on the sea-coast of Argos. He adds, in well-conceived climax to his speech, an appeal to higher motives. If Achilles will not relax his wrath against Agamemnon, at least let him have some compassion on the unoffending Greeks; let him bethink himself of the national honour—of his own great name; shall Hector be allowed to boast, as he does now, that no Greek dares meet him in the field?

But neither the eloquence of Ulysses, nor the garrulous pleading of his old foster-father Phœnix, who indulges himself and his company with stories of Achilles' boyhood, and of the exploits of his own younger days, can bend the iron determination of the hero. He will have none of Agamemnon's gifts, and none of Agamemnon's daughters—no, not were the princess as fair as Venus. Greece has store of fair maidens for him to choose from if he will. Nay, had either woman or wealth been his delight, he had scarce come to Troy. He had counted the cost when he set out for the war:—

> "Successful forays may good store provide;
> And tripods may be gained, and noble steeds:
> But when the breath of man hath passed his lips,
> Nor strength, nor foray can the loss repair.
> I by my goddess mother have been warned,
> The silver-footed Thetis, that o'er me
> A double chance of destiny impends:
> If here remaining, round the walls of Troy
> I wage the war, I ne'er shall see my home,
> But then undying glory shall be mine:

If I return, and see my native land,
My glory all is gone; but length of life
Shall then be mine, and death be long deferred." (D.)

Besides, he adds with biting sarcasm, Agamemnon can have no need now of his poor services. He has built a wall, he hears,—with ditch and palisade to boot: though he doubts whether, after all, it will keep out Hector. To be sure, when *he* was in the field, no wall was needed.

Nor is he a whit more moved by the few blunt and soldier-like remarks with which Ajax closes the conference. They may as well return, says that chief to Ulysses; words are lost upon one so obstinate as Achilles, who will neither listen to reason, nor cares for the love of his old companions in arms. Ajax has no patience, either, with the romantic side of the quarrel—

"And for a single girl! we offer seven."

Reproach and argument are alike in vain. The hero listens patiently and courteously; but nothing shall move him from his resolution, unless Hector, the god-like, shall carry fire and sword even to the ships and tents of the Myrmidons; a venture which, he thinks, the Trojan prince, with all his hardihood, will pause before he makes.

With downcast hearts the envoys return to Agamemnon; the aged Phœnix alone remaining behind, at Achilles' special request, to accompany him when he shall set sail for home. Great consternation falls on the assembled chiefs when they learn the failure of their overtures; only Diomed, chivalrous as ever, laments that they should have stooped to ask grace at such a churlish hand. Let Achilles go or stay as he will: for themselves—let every man refresh himself with

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food and wine—"for therein do lie both strength and courage"—and then betake themselves to their no less needful rest: ready, so soon as "the rosy-fingered dawn" appears, to set the battle fearlessly in array, in front of their ships and tents, against this redoubtable Hector.

But

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

There is no rest for the King of Men, who has the fate of a national armament on his soul. He looks forth upon the plain, where the thousand watchfires of the enemy are blazing out into the night, and hears the confused hum of their thick-lying battalions, and the sounds of the wild Eastern music with which they are enlivening their revels, and celebrating their victory by anticipation. He rises from his troubled couch, determined to hold a night-council with Nestor and other chiefs of mark. He is donning his armour, when he is visited by his brother Menelaus—for he too has no rest, thinking of the dire straits into which in his sole cause the armies of Greece are driven. The royal brothers go in different directions through the camp, and quietly rouse all the most illustrious captains. Nestor is the guiding spirit in the council, as before. He advises a reconnoissance of the enemy's lines under cover of the darkness. The office of a spy, be it remembered, was reckoned in these old times, as in the days of the Hebrew commonwealth, a service of honour as well as of danger; and the kings and chiefs of the Greeks no more thought it beneath their dignity than Gideon did in the case of the Midianites. The man who could discover for them the counsels of Hector would win for himself not only a solid reward, but an immortal name—

"High as heaven in all men's mouths
Should be his praise, and ample his reward;
For every captain of a ship should give
A coal-black ewe, and at her foot a lamb,
A prize beyond compare: and high should be
His place at banquets and at solemn feasts."

Diomed straightway volunteers for the adventure, and out of the many chiefs who offer themselves as his comrade, he chooses Ulysses. So—not without due prayer to Heaven—valour and subtlety go forth together on their perilous errand.

Meanwhile the same idea has occurred to Hector; he too would learn the counsels of his enemies. One Dolon—a young warrior who has a fine taste for horses, but is otherwise of somewhat feminine type (Homer tells us he was the only brother of five sisters), and whose main qualification is fleetness of foot—is tempted to undertake the enterprise on a somewhat singular condition—that he shall have as his prize the more than mortal horses of Achilles, when, as he doubts not will be soon the case, the spoils of the conquered Greeks shall come to be divided. And Hector, with equal confidence, swears "by his sceptre" that they shall be his and none other's. Wrapped in a cloak of wolfskin, and wearing a cap of marten's fur instead of a helmet, he too steals out into the night. He does not escape the keen vision of Ulysses. The Greek spies crouch behind some dead bodies, and allow him to pass them, when they rise and cut off his retreat to the Trojan camp. At first he thinks they are Trojans, sent after him by Hector;

"But when they came a spear-cast off, or less,
He knew them for his foes, and slipt away
With lithe knees flying: and they behind him press.
As when with jaggèd teeth two dogs of prey

Hang steadily behind, to seize and slay,
Down the green woods, a wild fawn or a hare,
That shrieking flies them; on his track so lay
Odysseus and the son of Tydeus there,
Winding him out from Troy, and never swerved a hair." (W.)

Their aim is to take him alive. Diomed at last gets within an easy spear-cast—

"Then, hurling, he so ruled his aim, the spear
Whizzed by the neck, then sank into the ground.
He, trembling in his teeth, and white with fear,
Stood: from his mouth there came a chattering sound.
They panting, as he wept, his arms enwound.
'Take me alive, and sell me home,' cried he;
'Brass, iron, and fine gold are with me found.
Glad will my father render countless fee,
If living by the ships they bear him news of me.'" (W.)

Ulysses parleys with the unhappy youth, and drags from his terrified lips not only the secret of his errand, but the disposition of the Trojan forces,—most convenient information for their own movements. Especially, he tells them where they might find an easy prey, such as his own soul would love. Rhesus, king of the Thracian allies, has his camp apart—

"No steeds that e'er I saw,
For size and beauty, can with his compare;
Whiter than snow, and swifter than the wind."

The unwilling treachery does not save his wretched life. Ulysses sarcastically admires his choice of a reward—

"High soared thy hopes indeed, that thought to win
The horses of Achilles; hard are they
For mortal man to harness or control,
Save for Achilles' self, the goddess-born."

Then—with the cruel indifference to human life which marks every one of Homer's heroes—he severs his head from his body.

Following the directions given by Dolon, the two Greeks make their way first to the quarters of the Thracian contingent. Swiftly and silently Diomed despatches the king and twelve of his warriors, as they sleep, while Ulysses drives off the snow-white horses. With these trophies they return safe to the Greek camp, where they are cordially welcomed, though it must be admitted they have gained but little insight into the designs of Hector.*

* There is pretty good authority for considering the whole of this night expedition, which forms a separate book (the tenth) in the division of the poem, as an interpolation. It is a separate lay of an exploit performed by Ulysses and Diomed, and certainly does not in any way affect the action of the poem.

# CHAPTER VII.

## THE THIRD BATTLE.

With the morrow's dawn begins the third and great battle, at the Greek lines, which occupies from the eleventh to the eighteenth book of the poem. Agamemnon is the hero of the earlier part of the day, and Hector is warned by Jupiter not to hazard his own person in the battle, unless the Greek king is wounded; which at last he is, by the spear of a son of Antenor. Ulysses and Diomed supply his place; until Paris, fighting in somewhat coward fashion, crouching behind the monumental stone of the national hero Ilus, pins Diomed through the right heel to the ground with an arrow. Ulysses stands manfully at bay almost alone amidst a host of enemies, holding his ground, though he too is wounded, till Ajax comes to his aid. Still the Greeks have the worst of it. The skilful leech Machaon, amongst others, is wounded by an arrow from the bow of Paris: till even Achilles, watching the fight from the lofty prow of his ship, sees his day of triumph and vengeance close at hand. He sends Patroclus to the field—nominally to inquire who has just been carried off wounded, but with the further object, we may suppose, of learning the state of the case more

thoroughly. Nestor, to whose tent Patroclus comes, begs him to use his influence now with his angry chief, and persuade him, if not to come to the rescue in person, at least to send his stout Myrmidons to the aid of his countrymen, under Patroclus' own command.

Again the Greeks are driven within their intrenchments, and Hector and the Trojan chariot-fighters pressing on them, attempt in their fierce excitement even to make their horses leap the ditch and palisade. Foiled in this, they dismount, and, forming in five detachments under the several command of Hector, Helenus, Paris, Æneas, and Asius son of Hyrtacus, they attack the stockade at five points at once. Asius alone refuses to quit his chariot; and choosing the quarter where a gate is still left open to receive the Greek fugitives, he drives full at the narrow entrance. But in that gateway on either hand stand two stalwart warders, Leonteus and Polypates. The latter is the son of the mighty hero Pirithous, friend and comrade of Hercules, and both are of the renowned race of the Lapithæ. Gallantly the two champions keep the dangerous post against all comers, while their friends from the top of the rampart shower huge stones upon their assailants. Even Hector at his point of attack can make no impression: and as his followers vainly strive to pass the ditch, an omen from heaven strikes them with apprehension as to the final issue. An eagle, carrying off a huge serpent through the air, is bitten by the reptile, and drops it, writhing and bleeding, in the midst of the combatants. Polydamas points it out to Hector, and reads in it a warning that their victory will be at best a dearly-bought one. Hector rebukes him for his weakness in putting faith in portents. The noble

words in which the poet sums up Hector's creed in such matters have passed into a proverb with patriots of every age and nation—

"The best of omens is our country's cause."

Sarpedon the Lycian, who claims none less than Jupiter for his father, has taken chief command of the Trojan auxiliaries, and, gallantly seconded by his countryman Glaucus, sweeps "like a black storm" on the tower where Mnestheus, the Athenian, commands, and is like to have carried it, when Glaucus falls wounded by an arrow from Teucer. The slaughter is terrible on both sides, and the ditch and palisade are red with blood. "The balance of the fight hangs even;" until at last the Trojan prince lifts a huge fragment of rock, and heaves it at the wooden gates which bar the entrance at his point of attack.

"This way and that the severed portals flew
Before the crashing missile; dark as night
His low'ring brow, great Hector sprang within;
Bright flashed the brazen armour on his breast,
As through the gates, two javelins in his hand,
He sprang; the gods except, no power might meet
That onset; blazed his eyes with lurid fire.
Then to the Trojans, turning to the throng,
He called aloud to scale the lofty wall;
They heard, and straight obeyed; some scaled the wall;
Some through the strong-built gates continuous poured;
While in confusion irretrievable
Fled to their ships the panic-stricken Greeks." (D.)

Neptune has been watching the fight from the wooded heights of Samothrace, and sees the imminent peril of his friends. "In four mighty strides"—the woods and mountains trembling beneath his feet—he reaches the bay of Œge, in Achaia, where far in the

depths lie his shining palaces of gold. There the sea-god mounts his chariot, yoking

> "Beneath his car the brazen-footed steeds,
> Of swiftest flight, with manes of flowing gold.
> All clad in gold, the golden lash he grasped
> Of curious work, and, mounting on his car,
> Skimmed o'er the waves; from all the depths below
> Gambolled around the monsters of the deep,
> Acknowledging their king; the joyous sea
> Parted her waves; swift flew the bounding steeds;
> Nor was the brazen axle wet with spray,
> When to the ships of Greece their lord they bore." (D.)

He takes the form of the soothsayer Calchas, and in his person rallies the discomfited Greeks, and summons the greater and the lesser Ajax to the rescue. Both feel a sudden accession of new vigour and courage; Ajax Oileus detects the divinity of their visitor, as the seeming Calchas turns to depart. The two chiefs quickly gather round them a phalanx of their comrades.

> "Spear close by spear, and shield by shield o'erlaid,
> Buckler to buckler pressed, and helm to helm,
> And man to man; the horse-hair plumes above,
> That nodded on the warriors' glittering crests,
> Each other touched, so closely massed they stood.
> Backward by many a stalwart hand were drawn
> The spears, in act to hurl; their eyes and minds
> Turned to the front, and eager for the fray." (D.)

Hector's career is stayed. Ajax the Lesser brings into play his band of Locrian bowmen, of little use in the open field, but good when they are under cover.

> "Theirs were not the hearts
> To brook th' endurance of the standing fight;
> Nor had they brass-bound helms with horse-hair plume,
> Nor ample shields they bore, nor ashen spear,
> But came to Troy in bows and twisted slings
> Of woollen cloth confiding."

The galling storm of their arrows throws confusion

into the Trojan ranks. Helenus and Deiphobus, Hector's brothers, have already been led off wounded: Asius son of Hyrtacus has found his trust in chariot and horses vain, and lies dead within the Greek lines. But Hector still presses on, and Paris shows that he can play the soldier on occasion as successfully as the gallant. The Greeks, too, miss their leaders. Agamemnon, Ulysses, Diomed, are all disabled for the time. The two Ajaxes and Idomeneus of Crete do all that man can do. But the stockade has been forced, and the fight is now round the ships,—the last hope of bare safety for the Greek forces. If Hector burns them, as he boasts he will, all means of retreat, all the long-cherished prospect of seeing their homes again, are lost to them. In a hasty conference with his wounded companions beside his galley, Agamemnon, suffering and dispirited, once more counsels retreat before it be too late. If they can but hold out till nightfall, then, under cover of the darkness, he proposes to take the sea. Those vessels which lie close to the shore may be launched at once without discovery from the enemy, and kept out at anchor: the rest can follow when the Trojans have, as usual, withdrawn from immediate attack, as soon as the shades of evening make the distinction hazardous between friend and foe. Ulysses and Diomed overrule the proposal; and the wounded leaders return to the scene of combat, unable to take an active part, but inspiriting their men from safe posts of observation.

The interlude of comedy is furnished again by the denizens of Olympus. Juno has watched with delight the successful efforts of Neptune to rally the Greeks against Hector and the hateful Trojans; but she is in

an agony of apprehension lest Jupiter, who has his attention just now occupied in Thrace, should interfere at this critical moment, and still grant the victory to Hector. She determines to put in force all her powers of blandishment, and to coax the Thunderer to spend in her company those precious hours which are laden with the fate of her Greeks. She is not content with her ordinary powers of fascination: she applies to the goddess of love for the loan of her magic girdle,—

> "Her broidered cestus, wrought with every charm
> To win the heart; there Love, there young Desire,
> There fond Discourse, and there Persuasion dwelt,
> Which oft enthrals the mind of wisest men."

It certainly enthrals the mind of the sovereign of Olympus; who, in all cases where female attractions were concerned, was even as the most foolish of mortals. Transfigured by the cestus of Venus, his queen appears to him in a halo of celestial charms which are irresistible. In her company he speedily forgets the wretched squabbles of the creatures upon earth. Juno has bribed the god of sleep also to become her accomplice; and the dread king is soon locked in profound repose.

Then Neptune seizes his opportunity, and heads the Greeks in person. Agamemnon, disregarding his recent wound, is seen once more in the front of the battle. Ajax meets Hector hand to hand, receives his spear full in his breast just where his cross-belts meet, and so escapes unwounded. As the Trojan prince draws back to recover himself, the giant Greek upheaves a huge stone that has shored up one of the galleys, and hurls it with main strength against his breast. "Like an oak of the forest struck by lightning" Hector falls prone in the dust. With shouts of exul-

tation, Ajax and his comrades rush to crown their victory by stripping his armour; but the great chiefs of the enemy,—Æneas, Polydamas, the Lycian captains Sarpedon and Glaucus—gather round and lock their shields in front of the fallen hero, while others bear him aside out of the battle, still in a death-like swoon, to where his chariot stands. Dismayed at the fall of their great leader, the Trojans give ground; the trench is recrossed, and the Greeks breathe again.

Jupiter awakes from sleep just in time to see the mischief that has been done; the Trojans in flight, the Greeks with Neptune at their head pursuing; Hector lying senseless by the side of his chariot, still breathing heavily, and vomiting blood from his bruised chest, and surrounded by his anxious comrades. He turns wrathfully upon Juno—it is her work, he knows. He reminds her of former penalties which she had brought upon herself by deceiving him.

> "Hast thou forgotten how in former times
> I hung thee from on high, and to thy feet
> Attached two ponderous anvils, and thy hands
> With golden fetters bound which none might break?
> There didst thou hang amid the clouds of heaven:
> Through all Olympus' breadth the gods were wroth;
> Yet dared not one approach to set thee free." (D.)

He does not proceed, however, to exercise any such barbarous conjugal discipline on this occasion, and is readily appeased by his queen's assurance that the interference of Neptune was entirely on his own proper motion. He condescends even to explain why he desires to give a temporary triumph to the Trojans: it is that, in accordance with his sworn promise to Thetis, he may avenge the insult offered to her son

Achilles, by teaching the Greeks their utter helplessness without him.

The Goddess of the Rainbow is sent to warn Neptune, on pain of the Thunderer's displeasure, to quit the fight. The sea-king demurs. "Was not a fair partition made, in the primeval days, between the three brother-gods, of the realms of Air, and Sea, and Darkness? and is not Earth common ground to all? Why is not Jupiter content with his own lawful domains, and by what right does he assume to dictate to a brother—and a brother-king?" Iris, however, calms him; he is perfectly right in theory, she admits; but in practice he will find his elder brother too strong for him. So the sea-god, in sulky acquiescence, leaves the scene of battle, and plunges down into the depths of his own dominion. Phœbus Apollo, on the other hand, receives Jupiter's permission to aid the Trojans. He sweeps down from Olympus to the spot where Hector lies, now slowly reviving. The hero recognises his celestial visitor, and feels at once his strength restored, and his ardour for the battle reawakened. To the consternation of the Greeks, he reappears in the field, fierce and vigorous as before. But he no longer comes alone; in his front moves Phœbus Apollo,—

> "His shoulders veiled in cloud; his arm sustained
> The awful Ægis, dread to look on, hung
> With shaggy tassels round and dazzling bright,
> Which Vulcan, skilful workman, gave to Jove,
> To scatter terror 'mid the souls of men." (D.)

When the sun-god flashes this in the faces of the Greeks, heart and spirit fail them. Stalking in the van of the Trojans, he leads them up once more against

the embankment, and, planting his mighty foot upon it, levels a wide space for the passage of the chariots,—

> " Easy, as when a child upon the beach,
> In wanton play, with hands and feet o'erthrows
> The mound of sand which late in sport he raised."

The habits and pursuits of grown-up men change with the passing generation; but the children of Homer's day might play with our own, and understand each other's ways perfectly.

Chariots and footmen press through the breach pell-mell, and again the battle rages round the Greek galleys. Standing on their high decks, the Greeks maintain the struggle gallantly with the long boarding-pikes, as we should call them, kept on board for use in such emergencies. Ajax' galley is attacked by Hector in person; but the Greek chief stands desperately at bay, wielding a huge pike thirty-three feet long, and his brother Teucer plies his arrows with fatal effect upon the crowded assailants: until Jupiter, alarmed lest Hector should be struck, snaps his bowstring in sunder. Hector calls loudly for fire to burn the vessels, and one warrior after another, torch in hand, makes the attempt at the cost of his life, until twelve lie biting the sand, slain by the huge weapon of Ajax.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS.

PATROCLUS, sitting in the tent of the wounded Eurypylus, sees the imminent peril of his countrymen. He cannot bear the sight, and taking hasty leave of his friend, hurries back to the quarters of Achilles, and stands before him in an agony of silent tears. At first the hero affects to chide his follower for such girlish sorrow—what cares he for the Greeks? It is plain, however, that he does care; and when Patroclus, in very outspoken terms, upbraids him for his obduracy, and asks that, even if the dark doom that hangs over him makes his chief unwilling to take the field in person, he will at least send him with the Myrmidons to the rescue, Achilles at once consents. Patroclus shall go, clad in his armour, that so perchance the Trojans may be deceived, and think that they see the well-known crest of Achilles himself once more leading the fight. Only he warns him not to advance too far; to be content with rescuing the galleys, and not attempt to press his victory home to the walls of Troy; in that case he will find the gods of the enemy turn their wrath against him. In spite of his assumed indifference, Achilles is intently watching the combat-

ants in the distance, and sees the flames rising in the air from the galley of Ajax. He can no longer restrain his feelings, but hurries his comrade forth. Patroclus puts on the harness of his chief, and takes his sword and shield: only the mighty spear he forbears to touch;—

> "None save Achilles' self that spear could poise,
> The far-famed Pelian ash, which to his sire,
> On Pelion's summit felled, to be the bane
> Of mightiest chiefs, the centaur Chiron gave."

He mounts the hero's chariot, driven by the noble Automedon, and drawn by the three horses, Xanthus, Balius, and Pedasus — or as we should call them, Chestnut, Dapple, and Swift-foot. The battalions of the Myrmidons eagerly gather round their leaders,— even old Phœnix taking command of one detachment. Achilles himself gives them a few fiery words of exhortation. "They have long chafed at their enforced idleness, and clamoured for the battle; lo! there lies the opportunity they have longed for." Then, standing in the midst, he pours from his most costly goblet the solemn libation to Jove, and prays of him for Patroclus victory and a safe return. The poet tells us, with that licence of prognostication which has been considerably abused by some modern writers of fiction, that half the prayer was heard, and half denied.

"Like a pack of ravening wolves, hungering for their prey," the Myrmidons launch themselves against the enemy. The Trojans recognise, as they believe, in the armed charioteer who heads them, the terrible Achilles, and consternation spreads through their ranks. Even Hector, though still fighting gallantly, is borne back over the stockade, and the ditch is filled with broken

chariots and struggling horses. Back towards the Trojan lines rolls the tide of battle. Sarpedon, the great Lycian chief, own son to Jupiter, falls by the spear of Patroclus. The ruler of Olympus has hesitated for a while whether he shall interpose to save him; but his fated term of life is come, and there is a mysterious Destiny in this Homeric mythology, against which even Jupiter seems powerless. All that he can do for his offspring is to insure for his body the rites of burial; and by his order the twin brothers, Sleep and Death, carry off the corpse to his native shore of Lycia.

But Patroclus has forgotten the parting caution of Achilles. Flushed with his triumph, he follows up the pursuit even to the walls of Troy. But there Apollo keeps guard. Thrice the Greek champion in defiance smites upon the battlements, and thrice the god shakes the terrible Ægis in his face. A fourth time the Greek lifts his spear, when an awful voice warns him that neither for him, nor yet for his mightier master Achilles, is it written in the fates to take Troy. Awe-struck, he draws back from the wall, but only to continue his career of slaughter among the Trojans. Apollo meets him in the field, strips from him his helmet and his armour, and shivers his spear in his hand. The Trojan Euphorbus, seeing him at this disadvantage, stabs him from behind, and Hector, following him as he retreats, drives his spear through his body. As the Trojan prince stands over his victim, exulting after the fashion of all Homeric heroes in what seems to our taste a barbarous and boastful spirit, Patroclus with his dying breath foretells that his slayer shall speedily meet his own fate by the avenging hand of Achilles. Hector spurns the prophecy, and rushes

after the charioteer Automedon, whom the immortal horses carry off safe from his pursuit. Then donning the armour of Achilles, so lately worn by Patroclus, he leads on the Trojans to seize the dead body, which Menelaus is gallantly defending.* After a long and desperate contest, the Greeks, locking their shields together in close phalanx, succeed in carrying it off, the two Ajaxes keeping the assailants at bay. Jupiter, in pity to the dead hero, casts a veil of darkness round him. But this embarrasses the movements of friends as well as enemies, and gives rise to a characteristic outburst on the part of Ajax, often quoted. He can fight best when he sees his way. "Give us but light, O Jove, and in the light, if thou seest fit, destroy us!"

We have now reached the crisis of the story. The wrath of Achilles against Agamemnon wanes and pales before the far more bitter wrath which now fills his whole soul against Hector, as the slayer of his comrade. Young Antilochus, son of Nestor, brings the mournful tidings to his tent, where he sits already foreboding the result, as he sees the Greeks crowding back to their galleys from the field in front of Troy. His grief is frantic—he tears his hair, and heaps dust upon his head, after a fashion which strongly suggests the Eastern character of the tale. His goddess-mother, Thetis "of the silver feet," hears him,

> "Beside her aged father where she sat,
> In the deep ocean-caves,"

and comes with all her train of sea-nymphs to console him, as when before he sat weeping with indignation at the insult of Agamemnon. In vain she strives to comfort him with the thought that his insulted honour has been fully satisfied—that the Greeks have bitterly rued

their former treatment of him. He feels only the loss of Patroclus, and curses the hour in which he was born. All that he longs for now is vengeance upon Hector. Thetis sorrowfully reminds him that it is written in the book of fate that when Hector falls, his own last hour is near at hand. Be it so, is his reply—death comes in turn to all men, and he will meet it as he may. But he cannot go forth to battle without armour; and the goddess promises that by the morrow's dawn, Vulcan, the immortal craftsman, shall furnish him with harness of proof.

The Greeks have fought their way to their vessels, step by step, with the dead body of Patroclus. But Hector with his Trojans has pressed them close all the way, and even when at the Greek lines seizes the corpse by the feet. Iris flies to Achilles with a message from Juno—will he see his dead friend given as a prey to the dogs and vultures?—He is without armour, true; but there is no need for him to adventure himself among the combatants; let him only show himself, let the Trojans but hear his voice, and it is enough. He does so; standing aloft upon the rampart, while Pallas throws her ægis over him, and surrounds his head with a halo of flashing light, he lifts his mighty voice and thrice shouts aloud. Panic seizes the whole host of Troy, and while they give ground in dismay, the dead Patroclus is borne off to the tent of Achilles.

Night falls on the plain, and separates the combatants. The Trojans, before their evening meal, hold an anxious council, in which Polydamas, as great in debate as Hector is in the field, advises that they should now retire within their walls. Achilles, it is evident, will head the Greeks in the morning, and who shall stand

before him? But the wise counsel of Polydamas meets the same fate as that of Ahithophel; Heaven will not suffer men to listen to it. Minerva perverts the understandings of the Trojans, and they prefer the rasher exhortations of Hector, who urges them at all hazards to keep the field.

Thetis, meanwhile, has sought out Vulcan, and bespoken his skill in the forging of new armour for her son. The lame god will work for her, she knows; for in the day when his cruel mother Juno, in wrath at his marvellous ugliness, cast him down from Olympus, she with her sister-goddess Eurynome had nursed him in their bosom till he grew strong. She finds him now hard at work at his forges, in the brazen halls which he has made for himself in heaven. He is completing at this moment some marvellous machinery—twenty tripods mounted on wheels of gold (the earliest hint of velocipedes), which are to move of themselves, and carry him to and fro to the assembly of the gods. Another marvel, too, is to be seen in the Fire-king's establishment, which has long been the desideratum of modern households, but which modern mechanical science has as yet failed to invent—automaton servants, worked by machinery.

> "In form as living maids, but wrought in gold,
> Instinct with consciousness, with voice endued,
> And strength, and skill from heavenly teachers drawn;
> These waited duteous at the monarch's side."

Willingly, at the request of the sea-goddess, Vulcan plies his immortal art. Helmet with crest of gold, breastplate "brighter than the flash of fire," and the pliant greaves that mould themselves to the limb, are soon completed. But the marvel of marvels is the

shield. On this the god bestows all his skill, and the poet his most graphic description. It is covered with figures of the most elaborate design, wrought in brass, and tin, and gold, and silver. In its centre are the sun, the moon, and all the host of heaven: round the rim flows the mighty ocean-river, which in Homeric as in Eastern mythology encompasses the earth; and on its embossed surface, crowded with figures, is embodied an epitome of human life, such as life was in the days of Homer. The tale is told in twelve compartments, containing each a scene of peace or war. Three groups represent a city in time of peace: a wedding procession with music and dancing, a dispute in the market-place, and a reference to the judgment of the elders gathered in council. Three represent a city in time of war: a siege, an ambuscade, and a battle. Then follow three scenes of outdoor country life: ploughing, the harvest, and the vintage. The lord of the harvest stands looking on at his reapers, like Boaz. In the vintage scene, the art of the immortal workman is minutely described. The vines are wrought in gold, the props are of silver, the grape-bunches are of a purple black, and there is a trench round of some dark-hued metal, crowned by a palisade of bright tin. Three pastoral groups complete the circle. First, a herd of oxen with herdsmen and their dogs, attacked by lions; secondly, flocks feeding in a deep valley, with the folds and shepherds' huts in the distance; and lastly, a festival dance of men and maidens in holiday attire, with the "divine bard," without whom no festival is complete, singing his lays to his harp in the midst, and two gymnasts performing their feats for the amusement of the crowd of lookers-on. If any reader should have imagined that Homer's

song of (it may be) three thousand years ago was rude and inartistic, he has but to read, in the version of any of our best translators, this description of the Shield of Achilles, to be convinced that the poet understood his work to the full as well as the immortal craftsman whom he represents as having wrought it. We need not trouble ourselves with the difficulty of that French critic, who doubted whether so many subjects could really be represented on any shield of manageable size —like Goldsmith's rustics who marvelled, in the case of the village schoolmaster,

> "That one small head could carry all he knew."

It is only necessary to point to the clever design of Flaxman for its realisation, and its actual embodiment (with the moderate diameter of three feet) in the shield cast by Pitts.

# CHAPTER IX.

## THE RETURN OF ACHILLES.

With a fierce delight Achilles gazes on the work of the Olympian armourer, before the dazzling brightness of which even the Myrmidons veil their faces. He sets forth at once for the tents of Agamemnon; and, taking his way along the shore, calls the leaders to battle as he passes each man's galley. The news of his coming spreads fast and far, and every man, from the highest to the lowest, even those who never quitted the ship on any other occasion—

> "The steersmen who the vessels' rudders hold,
> The very stewards who served the daily bread"—

flock to the central rendezvous to welcome back the champion of the Achæans. He is as impulsive and outspoken in his reconciliation as in his wrath. There is no need of mediation now between himself and Agamemnon. He accosts the king with a noble simplicity:

> "Great son of Atreus, what hath been the gain
> To thee or me, since heart-consuming strife
> Hath fiercely raged between us, for a girl—
> Who would to heaven had died by Dian's shafts
> That day when from Lyrnessus' captured town
> I bore her off, so had not many a Greek
> Bitten the bloody dust, by hostile hands

Subdued, while I in anger stood aloof.
Great was the gain to Troy; but Greece, methinks,
Will long retain the memory of our feud.
Yet pass we that; and though our hearts be sore,
Still let us school our angry spirits down.
My wrath I here abjure." (D.)

Agamemnon, for his part, magnanimously admits his error; laying the chief blame, however, upon Jupiter and Fate, who blinded the eyes of his understanding. The peace-offerings are produced and accepted, though Achilles only chafes at anything which can delay his vengeance. Ulysses strongly urges the necessity of a substantial meal for the whole army;

"For none throughout the day till set of sun,
Fasting from food, may bear the toils of war;
His spirit may be eager for the fray,
Yet are his limbs by slow degrees weighed down."

Achilles schools himself into patience while the rest act upon this prosaic but prudent counsel; but for himself, he will neither eat nor drink, nor wash his blood-stained hands, till he has avenged the death of his comrade. So he sits apart in his grief, while the rest are at the banquet: Minerva, by Jupiter's command, infusing into his body ambrosia and nectar, to sustain his strength. Another true mourner is Briseis. The first sight which meets the captive princess on her return to the Myrmidon camp is the bloody corpse of Patroclus. She throws herself upon it in an agony of tears. He, in the early days of her captivity, had spoken kind and cheering words, and had been a friend in time of trouble. So, too, Menelaus briefly says of him—"He knew how to be kind to all men." This glimpse which the poet gives us of the gentler features of the dead warrior's character is touching enough, when

we remember the utter disregard of an enemy's or a captive's feelings shown not only by Homer's heroes, but by those of the older Jewish Scriptures.

When all is ready for the battle, Achilles dons the armour of Vulcan, and draws from its case the Centaur's gift,—the ashen spear of Mount Pelion, which even Patroclus, it will be remembered, had not ventured to take in hand. Thus armed, he mounts his chariot, drawn by the two immortal steeds, Xanthus and Balius — for their mortal yoke-fellow had been slain in the battle in which Patroclus fell. As he mounts, in the bitter spirit which leads him to blame the whole world for the death of his friend, he cannot forbear a taunt to his horses—he trusts they will not leave him on the field, as they left Patroclus. Then the chestnut, inspired by Juno, for once finds a human voice, and exculpates himself and his comrade. It was no fault of theirs; it was the doom of Patroclus, and Achilles' own doom draws nigh. This day they will bring him back in safety; but the end is at hand.

Unlike Hector, Achilles knows and foresees his doom clearly; but, like Hector, he will meet it unflinchingly. Pope's version of his reply is deservedly admired. Xanthus has uttered his warning;

> "Then ceased for ever, by the Furies tied,
> His fateful voice. Th' intrepid chief replied
> With unabated rage—'So let it be!
> Portents and prodigies are lost on me;
> I know my fate; to die, to see no more
> My much-loved parents and my native shore;
> Enough—when Heaven ordains, I sink in night;
> Now perish Troy!' he said, and rushed to fight."

In the renewed battle which ensues, the gods, by express permission of their sovereign, take part.

Juno, Neptune, Minerva, Mercury, and Vulcan assist the Greeks: Mars, Venus, Apollo, Latona, and Diana join the Trojans. Their interference seems, at least to our modern taste, to assist in no way the action of the poem, and merely tends to weaken for the time the human interest. We must be content to assume that upon a Greek audience the impression was different. The only effect which these immortal allies produce upon the fortunes of the day is a negative one; Apollo incites Æneas to encounter Achilles, and when he is in imminent danger, Neptune conveys him away in a mist. Apollo performs the same office for Hector, who also engages the same terrible adversary, in the hope of avenging upon him the death of his young brother Polydorus. Disappointed in both his greater antagonists, Achilles vents his wrath in indiscriminate slaughter. Driving through the disordered host of the Trojans, his chariot wheels and axle steeped in blood, he cuts the mass of fugitives in two, and drives part of them into the shallows of the river Scamander. Leaping down from his chariot, he wades into the river, and there continues his career of slaughter, sword in hand. Twelve Trojan youths he takes alive and hands them over to his followers; sparing them for the present only to slay them hereafter as victims at the funeral-pile to appease the shade of Patroclus. Another suppliant for his mercy has a singular history. The young Lycaon, one of the many sons of Priam, had been taken prisoner by him in one of his raids upon Trojan territory, and sold as a slave in Lemnos. He had been ransomed there and sent home to Troy, only twelve days before he fell into his enemy's hands again here in the bed of the Scamander. Achilles recognises him,

and cruelly taunts him with his reappearance: the dead Trojans whom he has slain will surely next come to life again, if the captives thus cross the seas to swell the ranks of his enemies. In vain Lycaon pleads for his life, that he is not the son of the same mother as Hector—that his brother Polydorus has just been slain, which may well content the Greek's vengeance. There is a gloomy irony in the words with which Achilles rejects his prayer. Before Patroclus fell, he had spared many a Trojan; but henceforth, all appeal to his mercy is vain—most of all from a son of Priam. But, in fact, the wish to escape one's fate he holds to be utterly unreasonable;

> "Thou too, my friend, must die—why vainly wail?
> Dead is Patroclus too, thy better far—
> Me too thou seest, how stalwart, tall, and fair,
> Of noble sire and goddess-mother born,
> Yet must I yield to death and stubborn fate,
> Whene'er, at morn or noon or eve, the spear
> Or arrow from the bow may reach my life." (D.)

At last the great river-god—whom the gods call Xanthus, but men Scamander—rises in his might, indignant at seeing his stream choked with corpses, and stained with blood. He hurls the whole force of his waves against Achilles, and the hero is fain to save himself by grasping an elm that overhangs the bank, and so swinging himself to land. But here Scamander pursues him, and, issuing from his banks, rolls in a deluge over the plain. Even the soul of Achilles is terror-stricken at this new aspect of death. Is he to die thus, like some vile churl—

> "Borne down in crossing by a wintry brook?"

Neptune and Minerva appear to encourage him, and give him strength to battle with the flood: and when Sca-

mander summons his brother-river Simois to his aid, Vulcan sends flames that scorch all the river-banks, consuming the trees and shrubs that clothe them, and threatening to dry up the very streams themselves. The river yields, and retires to his banks, leaving Achilles free to pursue his victories. He drives the Trojans inside their walls, and but that Apollo guards the gates, would have entered the city in hot pursuit. Hector alone remains without—his doom is upon him.

The gods, meanwhile, have entered the field of battle on their own account, and contributed, as before, a lùdicrous element to the action of the poem. Minerva fells Mars the war-god to the ground with a huge mass of rock, an ancient landmark, which she hurls against him; and he lies covering "above seven hundred feet," till Venus comes to his aid to lead him from the field, when the terrible goddess strikes her to the earth beside him. Juno shows the strength of those "white arms" which the poet always assigns to her, by a terrible buffet which she bestows, for no particular reason apparently, upon Diana, who drops her bow and loses her arrows, and flies weeping to her father Jupiter. He, for his part, has been watching the quarrels of his court and family with a dignified amusement;—

> "Jove as his sport the dreadful scene descries,
> And views contending gods with careless eyes." (P.)

Those philosophers who see a moral allegory in the whole of the Homeric story, have supplied us with a key to the conduct and feelings of Jupiter during this curious combat. "Jupiter, as the lord of nature, is well pleased with the war of the gods—that is, of earth, sea, air, &c.—because the harmony of all beings

arises from that discord. Thus heat and cold, moist and dry, are in a continual war, yet upon this depends the fertility of the earth and the beauty of the creation. So that Jupiter, who, according to the Greeks, is the soul of all, may well be said to smile at this contention."* Those readers who may not be satisfied with this solution must be content to take the burlesque as it stands.

* Eustathius, as quoted by Pope.

# CHAPTER X.

## THE DEATH OF HECTOR.

HECTOR remains alone outside the Scæan gate, awaiting his great enemy. In vain his aged father and mother from the walls entreat him to take shelter within, like the rest of his countrymen. He will not meet the just reproach of Polydamas, whose prudent counsel he rejected. The deaths of his friends who have fallen in this terrible battle, which he had insisted upon their risking, hang heavy on his soul. He, at least, will do what he may for Troy. Yet he has no confidence in the result of the encounter. If he were only sure that Achilles would listen, he would even now offer to restore Helen, and so end this disastrous war. But he feels it is too late; vengeance alone will now content Achilles.

> "Not this the time, nor he the man with whom
> By forest oak or rock, like youth and maid,
> To hold light talk as youth and maid might hold.
> Better to dare the fight, and know at once
> For whom the vict'ry is decreed by Heaven."

Achilles draws near. The courage which has never failed Hector before, wholly deserts him now; he turns and flies, "like a dove from the falcon." Judged by

any theory of modern heroism, his conduct is simply indefensible. Critics tell us that the poet, in order to enhance the glory of his chief hero, makes even the champion of Troy fear to face him. But it is no compliment, in our modern eyes, to a victorious warrior, to have it explained that his crowning victory was won over a coward. Yet perhaps there was something of this feeling maintained even by Englishmen in days not so very long gone by, when it was the popular fashion to represent Frenchmen generally, and the great French general in particular, as always running away from the English bayonets. However, to Homer's public it was evidently not incongruous or derogatory to the heroic type of character, that sudden panic should seize even the bravest in the presence of superior force. Hector, as has been said, turns and flies for his life.

Thrice round the walls of the city, his friends looking on in horror at the terrible race, he flies, with Achilles in pursuit. In each course he tries to reach the gates, that his comrades may either open to him, or at least cover him by launching their missiles from the walls against his enemy. But still Achilles turns him back towards the plain, signing to the Greeks to hurl no spear, nor to interfere in any way with his single vengeance. The gods look down from Olympus with divided interest. Jupiter longs to save him; but Minerva sternly reminds him of the dread destiny—the Eternal Law—which even the Ruler of Olympus is bound to reverence. Once more he lifts in heaven the golden scales, and finds that Hector's fate weighs down the balance. Then, at last, his guardian Apollo leaves him. Minerva, on her part, comes to the aid of her

favourite Achilles with a stratagem, as little worthy of his renown (to our view) as the sudden panic of Hector. She appears by the side of the Trojan hero in the likeness of his brother Deiphobus, and bids him stand and fight; they two, together, must surely be a match for Achilles. Hector turns and challenges his adversary. One compact he tries to make, in a few hurried words, before they encounter; let each promise, since one must fall, to restore the dead body of his enemy in all honour to his kindred. Achilles makes no reply but this:—

> "Talk not to me of compacts; as 'tween men
> And lions no firm concord can exist,
> Nor wolves and lambs in harmony unite,
> But ceaseless enmity between them dwells:
> So not in friendly terms, nor compact firm,
> Can thou and I unite, till one of us
> Glut with his blood the mail-clad warrior Mars.
> Mind thee of all thy fence; behoves thee now
> To prove a spearman skilled, and warrior brave.
> For thee escape is none; now, by my spear,
> Hath Pallas doomed thy death: my comrade's blood,
> Which thou hast shed, shall all be now avenged." (D.)

The spear launched with these words misses its mark: that of Hector strikes full in the centre of his enemy's shield, but it glances harmlessly off from the fire-god's workmanship. He looks round for Deiphobus to hand him another; but the false Deiphobus has vanished, and, too late, Hector detects the cruel deceit of the goddess. He will die at least as a hero should. He draws his sword, and rushes on Achilles. The wary Greek eyes him carefully as he comes on, and spies the joint in his harness where the breastplate meets the throat. Through that fatal spot he drives his spear, and the Trojan falls to the ground mortally wounded,

but yet preserving the power of speech. As his conqueror stands over him cruelly vaunting, and vowing to give his body to the dogs and to the vultures, he makes a last appeal to his mercy. "By the heads of his parents" he beseeches him to spare this last indignity; the ransom which his father Priam will offer shall be ample for one poor corpse. But the wrath of Achilles has become for the present mere savage madness. Neither prayer nor ransom shall avail in this matter. Hector's last words are prophetic:—

> "I know thee well, nor did I hope
> To change thy purpose; iron is thy soul.
> But see that on thy head I bring not down
> The wrath of heaven, when by the Scæan gate
> The hand of Paris, with Apollo's aid,
> Brave warrior as thou art, shall strike thee down." (D.)

The only glimpse of nobility which Achilles shows throughout the whole scene is in his stoical answer:—

> "Die thou! my fate I then shall meet, whene'er
> Jove and th' immortal gods shall so decree."

What follows is mere brutality. The Greeks crowd round, and drive their weapons into the senseless body.

> "And one to other looked, and said, 'Good faith,
> Hector is easier far to handle now,
> Than when erewhile he wrapped our ships in fire.'"

Does it need here to do more than recall the too well remembered sequel—how the savage victor pierced the heels of his dead enemy, and so fastened the body to his chariot, and dragged him off to his ships, in full sight of his agonised parents? how

> "A cloud of dust the trailing body raised;
> Loose hung his glossy hair; and in the dust
> Was laid that noble head, so graceful once."

Or how the miserable Priam, grovelling on the floor of his palace, besought his weeping friends to suffer him to rush out of the gates, and implore the mercy of the merciless Achilles? Less horrible, if not less piteous, is the picture of Andromache :—

"To her no messenger
Had brought the tidings, that without the walls
Remained her husband; in her house withdrawn,
A web she wove, all purple, double woof,
With varied flowers in rich embroidery,
And to her neat-haired maids she gave command
To place the largest caldrons on the fires,
That with warm baths, returning from the fight,
Hector might be refreshed; unconscious she,
That by Achilles' hand, with Pallas' aid,
Far from the bath, was godlike Hector slain.
The sounds of wailing reached her from the tower.
* * * * * *
Then from the house she rushed, like one distract,
With beating heart; and with her went her maids.
But when the tower she reached, where stood the crowd,
And mounted on the wall, and looked around,
And saw the body trailing in the dust,
Which the fleet steeds were dragging to the ships,
A sudden darkness overspread her eyes;
Backward she fell, and gasped her spirit away.
Far off were flung th' adornments of her head,
The net, the fillet, and the woven bands;
The nuptial veil by golden Venus given,
That day when Hector of the glancing helm
Led from Eëtion's house his wealthy bride.
The sisters of her husband round her pressed,
And held, as in the deadly swoon she lay." (D.)

The body is dragged off to the ships, and flung in the dust in front of the bier on which Patroclus lies. And now, at last, when he has been fully avenged, the due honours shall be paid to his beloved remains, while the dogs and vultures feast on those of Hector. Thrice in slow procession, with a mournful chant, the Myrmi-

dons lead their horses round the bier. While Achilles sleeps the deep sleep of exhaustion after the long day's battle, the shade of his dead friend appears to him, and chides him for leaving him so long unburied, a wandering ghost in the gloom below.

"Sleep'st thou, Achilles, mindless of thy friend,
Neglecting not the living, but the dead?
Hasten my fun'ral rites, that I may pass
Through Hades' gloomy gates; ere those be done,
The spirits and spectres of departed men
Drive me far from them, nor allow to cross
Th' abhorred river; but forlorn and sad
I wander through the widespread realms of night.
And give me now thy hand, whereon to weep;
For never more, when laid upon the pyre,
Shall I return from Hades; never more,
Apart from all our comrades, shall we two,
As friends, sweet counsel take; for me, stern Death,
The common lot of man, has ope'd his mouth;
Thou too, Achilles, rival of the gods,
Art destined here beneath the walls of Troy
To meet thy doom; yet one thing must I add,
And make, if thou wilt grant it, one request:
Let not my bones be laid apart from thine,
Achilles, but together, as our youth
Was spent together in thy father's house." (D.)

As eager now to do honour to Achilles as he was before to insult him, Agamemnon has despatched a strong force at early dawn to cut down wood for a huge funeral pile. The burial rites are grandly savage. In long procession and in full panoply the Myrmidons bear the dead hero to the pile, and the corpse is covered with the long locks of hair which every warrior in turn, Achilles first, cuts off as an offering to the gods below. Four chariot-horses, and two dogs "that had fed at their master's board," are slain upon the pile, to follow him, in case he should have need of them, into the dark

and unknown country: and last, the twelve Trojan captives, according to his barbarous vow, are slaughtered by Achilles in person, and laid upon the pile. The winds of heaven are solemnly invoked to fan the flames, which roar and blaze all night; and all night Achilles pours copious libations of wine from a golden goblet. With wine also the embers are quenched in the morning, and the bones of Patroclus are carefully collected and placed in a golden urn, to await the day, which Achilles foresees close at hand, when they shall be buried under one mound with his own.

There follow the funeral games. First, the chariot-race, in which Diomed carries off an easy victory with the Trojan horses which he captured from Æneas. An easy victory, because the goddess Minerva not only breaks the pole of Eumelus, his most formidable rival, but hands Diomed back his whip when he drops it: interpreted by our realistic critics to mean, that prudence bids him take a second whip as a reserve. The old "horse-tamer," Nestor, gives his son Antilochus such cunning directions, that he comes in second, though his horses are confessedly the slowest of the whole field. Next comes the battle with the cœstus—that barbarous form of boxing-glove, which, far from deadening the force of the blow delivered, made it more damaging and dangerous, inasmuch as the padding consisted of thongs of raw ox-hide well hardened. The combat in this case is very unequal, since the giant Epeius speedily fells his younger and lighter antagonist, who is carried almost senseless from the lists. The wrestlers are better matched; the skill and subtlety of Ulysses are a counterpoise to the huge bulk and somewhat inactive strength of Ajax, who lifts his opponent

off his feet with ease, but is brought to the ground himself by a dexterous kick upon the ancle-joint. Another fall, in which neither has the advantage, leads to the dividing of the prize—though how it was to be divided practically is not so clear, since the first prize was a tripod valued at twelve oxen, and the second a female captive, reckoned to be worth four.* The foot-race is won by Ulysses, Minerva interfering for the second time to secure the victory for her favourite, by tripping up the lesser Ajax (son of Oileus), who was leading. The Greek poet does but refer what we should call an unlucky accident to the agency of heaven. A single combat on foot, with shield and spear, succeeds, the prize for which is the rich armour of which Patroclus had spoiled Sarpedon. He who first draws blood is to be the winner. Diomed and Ajax Telamon step into the lists, and the combat between the two great champions grows so fierce and hot, that the spectators insist on their being separated, and again the honours are adjudged to be equal; although Dio-

* Madame Dacier's remarks on this valuation, and Pope's note upon them, are amusing :—

"I cannot in civility neglect a remark made upon this passage by Madame Dacier, who highly resents the affront put upon her sex by the ancients, who set (it seems) thrice the value upon a tripod as upon a beautiful female slave. Nay, she is afraid, the value of women is not raised even in our days; for she says there are curious persons now living who had rather have a true antique kettle than the finest woman alive. I confess I entirely agree with the lady, and must impute such opinions of the fair sex to want of taste in both ancients and moderns. The reader may remember that these tripods were of no use, but made entirely for show; and consequently the most satirical critick could only say, the woman and tripod ought to have borne an equal value."

med, who was clearly getting the advantage, receives the chief portion of the divided prize. In the quoit-throwing Ajax is beaten easily; and critics have remarked that in no single contest does the poet allow him, though a favourite with the army, to be successful. Those who insist upon the allegorical view of the poem, tell us that the lesson is, that brute force is of little avail without counsel. The archers' prizes are next contended for, and we have the original of the story which has been borrowed, with some modifications, by many imitators from Virgil's time downwards, and figures in the history of the English 'Clym of the Clough,' and Tell of Switzerland. Teucer, reputed the most skilful bowman in the whole host, only shoots near enough to cut the cord which ties the dove to the mast, while Meriones follows the bird with his aim as she soars far into the air, and brings her down, pierced through and through, with his arrow. But Meriones had vowed an offering to Apollo "of the silver bow," which Teucer, in the pride of his heart, had neglected. The games are closed with hurling the spear, when the king Agamemnon himself, desirous to pay all honour to his great rival's grief, steps into the arena as a competitor. With no less grace and dignity Achilles accepts the compliment, but forbids the contest. "O son of Atreus, we know thou dost far surpass us all"—and he hands the prize for his acceptance.

The anger against Agamemnon is past: but not so the savage wrath against Hector. Combined with his passionate grief for Patroclus, it amounts to madness. Morning after morning he rises from the restless couch where he has lain thinking of his friend, and lashing the dead corpse afresh to his chariot, drags it furiously

thrice round the mound that covers Patroclus' ashes. Twelve days has the body now lain unburied; but Venus and Apollo preserve it from decay. Venus sheds over it ambrosial roseate unguents, and Apollo covers it with a dark cool cloud. In less mythological language, the loathliness of death may not mar its beauty, nor the sunbeams breed in it corruption. Even the Olympians are seized with horror and pity. In spite of the remonstrances of his still implacable queen, Jupiter instructs Thetis to visit her son, and soften his cruel obduracy. At the same time he sends Iris to Priam, and persuades him to implore Achilles in person to restore the body of his son. Accompanied by a single herald, and bearing a rich ransom, the aged king passes the Greek lines by night (for Mercury himself becomes his guide, disguised in the form of a Greek straggler, and casts a deep sleep upon the sentinels). He reaches the tent of Achilles, who has just ended his evening meal, throws himself at his feet, and kisses "the dreadful murderous hands by which so many of his sons have fallen," in an agony of supplication. He adjures the conqueror, by the thought of his own aged father Peleus—now looking and longing for his return—to have some pity on a bereaved old man, whose son can never return to him alive; and at least to give him back the body.

> "And for thy father's sake look pitying down
> On me, more needing pity: since I bear
> Such grief as never man on earth hath borne,
> Who stoop to kiss the hand that slew my son."

With the impulsive suddenness which is a part of his character, Achilles gives way at once—prepared, indeed, to yield, by his mother's remonstrances. He

gives orders to have the body clothed in costly raiment, and washed and anointed by the handmaidens; nay, even lifts his dead enemy with his own hands, and lays him on a couch. Yet he will not let Priam as yet look upon the corpse, lest at the sight of his grief his own passion should break out afresh. The father spends the night in the tent of his son's slayer, and there he closes his eyes in sleep for the first time since the day of Hector's death. In the morning he returns to Troy with his mournful burden, and the funeral rites of Hector close the poem. The boon which Achilles has granted he makes complete by the spontaneous offer of twelve days' truce, that so Troy may bury her dead hero with his rightful honours. The wailings of Priam and Hecuba, though naturally expressed, are but commonplace compared with the last tribute of the remorseful Helen:—

" Hector, of all my brethren dearest thou!
True, godlike Paris claims me as his wife,
Who bore me hither—would I then had died!
But twenty years have passed since here I came,
And left my native land; yet ne'er from thee
I heard one scornful, one degrading word;
And when from others I have borne reproach,
Thy brothers, sister, or thy brothers' wives,
Or mother (for thy sire was ever kind
Even as a father), thou hast checked them still
With tender feeling and with gentle words.
For thee I weep, and for myself no less,
For through the breadth of Troy none love me now,
None kindly look on me, but all abhor." (D.)

# CHAPTER XI.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THE character of Hector has been very differently estimated. Modern writers upon Homer generally assume that the ancient bard had, as it were, a mental picture of all his great heroes before him, of their inner as well as of their outer man, and worked from this in the various acts and speeches which he has assigned to each. Probably nothing could be further from the truth. If the poet could be questioned as to his immortal work, and required to give a detailed character of each of his chief personages, such as his modern admirers present us with, he would most likely confess that such character as his heroes possess was built up by degrees, as occasion called for them to act and speak, and that his own portraits (where they were not derived from the current traditions) rested but little upon any preconceived ideal. It is very difficult to estimate character at all in a work of fiction in which the principles of conduct are in many respects so different from those of our own age. How far even the ablest critics have succeeded in the attempt in the case of Hector may be judged from this; that whereas Colonel Mure speaks of "a turn for vainglorious boast-

ing" as his characteristic defect,* Mr Froude remarks that "while Achilles is all pride, Hector is all modesty." † Both criticisms are from writers of competent taste and judgment; but both cannot possibly be true. There can be no doubt that Hector makes a considerable number of vaunting speeches in the course of the poem—vaunts which he does not always carry out; but in this respect he differs rather in degree than in principle from most of the other warriors, Greek as well as Trojan; and if the boasts of Achilles are always made good, while Hector's often come to nothing, that follows almost necessarily from the fact that Achilles is the hero of the tale. A boastful tongue and a merciless spirit are attributes of the heroic character in Homer: his heroes bear a singular resemblance in these two points to the "braves" of the American Indians; while they are utterly unlike them in their sensitiveness to physical pain, their undisguised horror of death, and their proneness to give loud expression to both feelings. Without attempting to sketch a full-length portrait, which probably Homer himself would not recognise, it may be said that Hector interests us chiefly because he is far more human than Achilles, in his weakness as well as in his strength; his honest love for his wife and child, his pitying condonation of Helen, his half-contemptuous kindness to his weak brother Paris, his hearty and unselfish devotion to his country. Achilles is the "hero," indeed, in the classical sense—*i. e.*, he is the demi-god, superior to many of the mortal weaknesses which are palpable enough in the character of his antagonist: as little

* Liter. of Anc. Greece, i. 349.

† Short Studies on Great Subjects, ii. 175.

susceptible to Hector's alternations of confidence and panic, as to his tender anxieties about his wife and child. The contrast between the two is very remarkable; as strong, though of quite a different kind, as that between the two chief female characters in the poem—Helen, charming even in her frailty, attracting us and compelling our admiration in spite of our moral judgment; Andromache, the blameless wife and mother, whose charm is the beauty of true womanhood, and whose portrait, as drawn by the poet, bears strong witness by its sweetness and purity to the essential soundness of the domestic relations in the age which he depicts.

The poem, as we have seen, ends somewhat abruptly. We learn nothing from it of the fate of Troy, except so far as we have been taught throughout the tale that the fortunes of the city and people depended wholly upon Hector. "Achilles' wrath" was the theme of the song, and now that this has been appeased, we wait for no further catastrophe. Yet, if Achilles has been the hero, it is remarkable that the poet's parting sympathies appear to rest, as those of the reader almost certainly will, with Hector. It would seem that Homer himself felt something of what he makes Jupiter express with regard to the Trojans—"They interest me, though they must needs perish." The Trojan hero must fall, or the glory of the Greek could not be consummated; but the last words of the poem, as they record his funeral honours, so they express the poet's regretful eulogy:—

"Such honours paid they to the good knight Hector."

Virgil, in his Æneid, naturally exalts the glory of Hector, because it was his purpose to trace the origin

of the Romans from Troy; but we need not wonder that in later days, when the Homeric legends were worked up into tales of Christian chivalry, Hector, and not Achilles, became the model of a Christian knight. When the great Italian poet drew his character of Orlando, as a type of chivalry, he had the Trojan hero in his mind.

One of the earliest and most curious travesties of the Iliad—for it is hardly more, though made in all good faith, according to the taste of the times—was the work of an English troubadour, Benedict de St Maur, of the time of Henry II. It was reproduced, as a prose romance, in Latin, by Guido de Colonna, a Sicilian; but is better known—so far as it can be said to be known at all—as the 'History of the Warres of the Greeks and Trojans,' by John Lydgate, monk of Bury St Edmunds, first printed in 1513. The writer professedly takes Colonna as his original. The heroes of the Iliad reappear as the knights of modern chivalry; they fight on horseback, observe all the rules of medieval courtesy, and "fewtre their speres" at each other exactly in the style of the Companions of the Round Table. Agamemnon is very like Arthur, and Achilles Sir Lancelot, under other names. But Hector is here also plainly the favourite hero. Thersites figures as a dwarf, with all the malice and mischief peculiar, and in some degree permitted, to those imaginary types of humanity. The closing lines of Lydgate's third book will give some idea of the strange transformation which Homer's story undergoes in the hands of our medieval poet, and is a curious instance of the way in which the zealous churchman "improves" his pagan subject. He is describing the funeral rites of Hector:—

"And when Priam in full thrifty wyse
Performed hath as ye have heard devyse,
Ordained eke, as Guido * can you tell,
A certain nombre of priestes for to dwell
In the temple in their devotions,
Continually with devout orisons
For the soule of Hector for to pray.

* * * * *

To which priestes the kyng gave mansyons,
There to abide, and possessyons,
The which he hath to them mortysed
Perpetually, as ye have heard devysed,
And while they kneel, pray, and wake,
I caste fully me an end to make
Finally of this my thirde booke
On my rude manner as I undertooke."

The way in which the Homeric characters are modernised in Chaucer and Dryden, and even in Shakspeare's 'Troilus and Cressida,' is a deviation from their originals hardly more excusable, though less absurd, than this of Lydgate's. They copied, in fact, not from the original at all, but from the medieval corruptions of it. Racine's tragedies are in a higher vein, and his Iphigenia, though not Homer's story, does more justice to some of Homer's characters: but after all, as has been well observed, "they are dressed in the Parisian fashions, with speech and action accordingly." †

The Iliad, as has been already remarked, closes more abruptly than its modern title would seem to justify, for the Tale of Troy is left half untold. Imitators of the great bard followed him, and though their works are lost to us, the legends upon which they worked have been reproduced by later writers. The poems once known as the 'Little Iliad' and the 'Sacking of Troy' have left little more than their names, and some few frag-

* Guido de Colonna. † Gladstone.

ments which do not raise much regret for the loss of the remainder; but the leading events of which they treated are preserved in the works of the Greek dramatists and of Virgil. It may not be out of place here to sketch briefly the sequel to Homer's story.

Troy fell in that tenth year of the siege, though new and remarkable allies came to the aid of Priam. From the far north of Thrace came a band of Amazons—women-warriors who, in spite of their weaker sex, proved more than a match in battle for the men of Greece. Their queen Penthesilea was said to be the daughter of the War-god; and under her leading, once more the Trojans tried their fortune in the open field, not unsuccessfully, until she too fell by the spear of Achilles. Proceeding to possess himself of her helmet, as the conqueror's spoil, he was struck with her remarkable beauty, and stood entranced for some moments in sorrow and admiration. It is the scene from which Tasso borrows his story of Clorinda, and which Spenser had in his mind when he makes Sir Artegal, after having unhelmed the fair Britomart in combat, let fall his sword at the sight of her "angel-face"—

> "His powerless hand, benumbed with secret fear,
> From his revengefull purpose shronke abacke,
> And cruel sword out of his fingers slacke
> Fell down to ground, as if the steel had sence
> And felt some ruth, or sence his hand did lacke,
> Or both of them did think obedience
> To doe to so divine a Beautie's excellence."
>
> —B. IV. c. vi. st. 21.

Thersites—who had by this time forgotten the chastisement inflicted on him by Ulysses for his scurrilous tongue—ventured a jest upon Achilles' sensibility, and

was struck dead by a blow from the hero's unarmed hand. Next came upon the scene the tall Ethiopian Memnon, son of the Dawn, a warrior of more than mortal beauty, sent either from Egypt or from the king of Assyria (for the legends vary), with a contingent of fierce negro warriors, who carried slaughter into the Greek ranks, until Memnon too fell by the hand of the same irresistible antagonist. These were only brief respites for the doomed city. But it was not to fall by the hand of Achilles. Before its day of destruction came, the Greek hero had met with the fate which he himself foresaw—which had been prophesied for him alike by his mother the sea-goddess, by the wondrous utterance of his horse Xanthus, and by the dying words of Hector. An arrow from Paris found the single vulnerable spot in his right heel, and stretched him where he had slain his Trojan enemy—before the Scæan gate. But his death, according to the legends, was no more like that of common mortals than his life had been. He does not go down into those gloomy regions where the ghosts of his friend Patroclus and his enemy Hector wander. It was not death, but a translation. The Greeks had prepared for him a magnificent funeral pile, but the body of the hero suddenly disappeared. His mother Thetis conveyed it away to the island of Leukè in the Euxine Sea, to enjoy in that seclusion a new and perpetual life. So early is the legend which the romance of Christendom adopted for so many of its favourites—notably for the English Arthur, borne by the three mysterious queens to

"The island valley of Avilion,"

where, it was long said and believed, he lay either in a charmed sleep or a passionless immortality. One legend ran that the Greek hero, in his happy island, was favoured with the society of Helen, whose matchless beauty he had much desired to see.

His wondrous shield and armour—the masterpieces of Vulcan—were left by Thetis as a prize for "the bravest of the Greeks," and became almost as fatal a source of discord as the golden apple which had been labelled for "the fairest." Ulysses and Ajax were the most distinguished claimants, and when, as before, counsel was preferred to strength, Ajax went mad with vexation, and fell upon his own sword. Ulysses handed on the coveted armour to its rightful inheritor, the young Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, who, in accordance with an oracle, had been sent for to take Troy. Still the city held out, secure so long as the sacred image of Minerva, the "Palladium," a gift from Jupiter himself, remained in the citadel: until Ulysses broke the spell by entering within the walls in disguise, and carrying it off. One quick eye discovered the venturous Greek, through his rags and self-inflicted wounds: Helen recognised him; but she was weary of her guilty life, and became an excusable traitress in favour of her lawful husband. It was again the fertile brain of Ulysses which conceived the stratagem of the wooden horse; and when the curiosity of the Trojans (against all ordinary probabilities, it must be confessed) dragged it inside the walls, the armed warriors whom it contained issued forth in the night, and opened the gates to their comrades.

The details of the sack of the city are neither more

nor less horrible than similar scenes which are unhappily too historical. Priam is slain at the altar of his house; his family either share his fate, or are carried into captivity. Of the contradictory legends as to the fate of "Hector's Andromache"—as in Virgil's great poem she pathetically calls herself—the reader will gladly choose, with that poet, the least painful version, which leaves her settled at Buthrotus in Epirus, in a peaceful retirement full of gentle regrets, as the wife of Hector's brother Helenus.

Of Helen and Menelaus we shall hear more in Homer's tale of the Wanderings of Ulysses. He says nothing of the scene which the later dramatists give us, by no means inconsistent with his own portrait of the pair, when at the taking of the city the outraged husband rushes upon the adulteress with uplifted sword, and drops his weapon at the sight of her well-remembered and matchless beauty. For the miserable sequel of Agamemnon's story we may refer also to the Odyssey. Few of the Greek heroes returned home in peace. They had insulted the gods of Troy, and they were cursed with toilsome wanderings and long banishment like Ulysses, or met with a worse fate still. Diomed did not indeed leave his wife Ægiale a heart-broken widow, as Dione in her anger had predicted, but found on his return that she had consoled herself with another lover in his absence, and narrowly escaped assassination by her hand. Teucer was refused a home by his father, because he did not bring his brother Ajax back with him to the old man. The lesser Ajax was wrecked and drowned on his homeward voyage. Fate spared Nestor, old as he was, to return to his stronghold at

Pylos ; but his son Antilochus had fallen in the flower of his age on the plains of Troy. The names of many of the wanderers were preserved in the colonies which they founded along the coasts of Greece and Italy, and the heroes of the great Siege of Troy spread its fame over all the then known world.

END OF THE ILIAD.

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